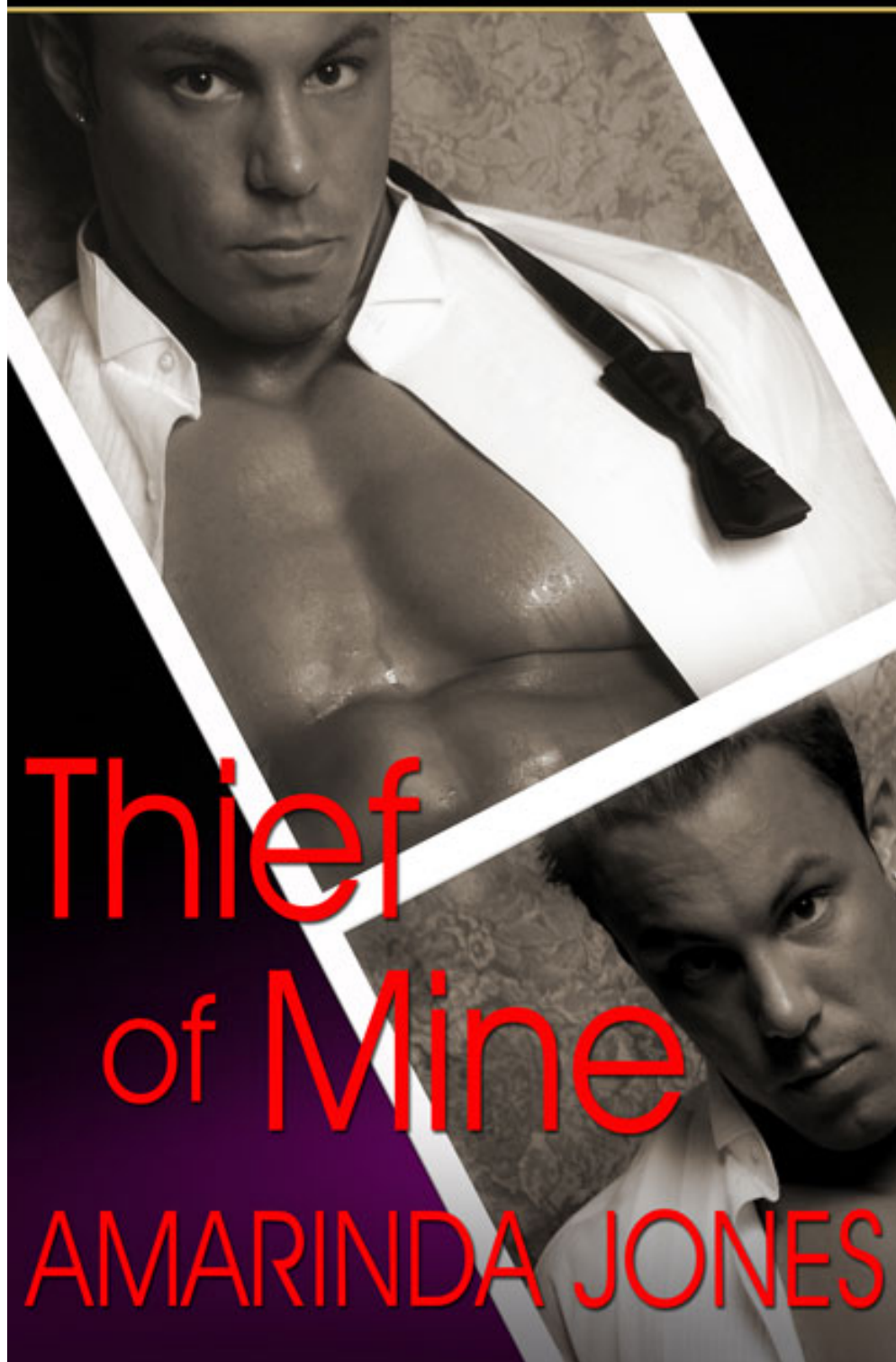


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



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Thief of Mine

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THIEF OF MINE

Amarinda Jones

Dedication

For fellow author Carol Lynne for reminding me to use the knick knacks on the table.

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Chapter One

“Holy crap!” Stella Rowallan shrieked out loud as she stopped in amazement and took in the scene before. Of all the things she expected to see going on in the brides’ room, this was not one of them. She expected maybe to see bridesmaids fighting over flowers, possibly the damage of a stiletto heel through a hem, perhaps the bride’s mother rushing around in a panicked frenzy or even something fairly simple like the bride dancing drunkenly after one too many glasses of the champagne that they had opened earlier. None of that would have surprised Stella. She had been to weddings before. She had seen and coped with all that and worse.

However this was different. Stella had not expected to see the bride bent forward over a chair, her white bridal skirts thrown up in wild disarray as a man thrust his cock in and out of her exposed and clearly willing backside as the bride begged him to go faster and harder. That was unusual. But that really wasn’t the thing that threw Stella the most. It was more that the man who was enthusiastically shagging the bride was not the groom. In fact, he was a stranger. A stranger with a muscled, flexing butt pointed straight at Stella and seemingly not about to stop what he was doing. How did one cope with that?

Kit Kincaid, the man in question, heard an intruder enter the room but he didn’t stop as he thrust back and forward into the bride’s ass. Why should he? He was enjoying himself and the bride had all but begged him not to stop. The pleasure between them was mutual. Kit didn’t care if another person was standing open mouthed and staring at him. As long as it wasn’t the groom, of course. It would be hard to explain why he was inside the man’s soon-to-be-wife’s body. The thought of telling the groom that the bride had begged him to fuck her was not a conversation he wanted to have with any man just about to get married. However, anyone else could watch. In fact, Kit kind of enjoyed it. He liked to shock people and knew that the intruder was most definitely shocked.

“Do you want to join in?” Kit turned to look at the intruder, grinning widely at the startled woman who stood behind him, her eyes on his butt. She was open mouthed in astonishment and dressed in an ugly pink dress that didn’t become her, nor probably any other woman on the planet. However, despite the dress, she was kind of cute standing there looking all stunned and outraged. Kit had a thing for prissy brunettes. And he certainly wasn’t averse to having an audience or having another woman join in on the action. In fact, the thought of it spurred him on and the bride shrieked out loud as he increased his thrusts.

“I... What? No.” Stella said as she moved further into the room. She was stunned, mesmerized and amazingly jealous. A long absence of sex could do that to a woman.

Stella was starting to think all sorts of things she knew she shouldn't but damn it, just watching this man rhythmically thrusting back and forward into the bride was making her hot and aching for action. How could he keep doing that when he had an audience? Did the man have no shame or sense of decorum? Why was he grinning at her as if he were enjoying being found with the bride like this? Didn't he care that was taking another man's woman on their wedding day?

The man with the great ass had his trousers around his ankles and his lean, muscular legs tensed with effort as he slammed into the bride. She moaned with pleasure. Stella could vaguely remember what that sort of pleasure felt like. Her eyes roamed his hair-sprinkled legs and wondered about the size of the cock that was ensconced within the bride. It had to be good to have her howling out loud like that. And that ass, all tensed muscle and...no, better to look at his face. It was a face that commanded attention, strong and angular with dark brown eyes that seemed to bore into Stella as if trying to work her out.

"Do you prefer to watch?" Kit was amused by the fact the woman was too stunned to do more than just stare. Most women would have run out of the room screaming in embarrassment. He was sure this woman probably meant to do just that, but something was holding her back. Interesting. He believed people's first reactions were always their most telling. So maybe threesomes weren't her thing. Maybe she just wanted a man. Kit Kincaid was happy to oblige once he was finished with the bride. "Do you want me to take you hard and fast in the ass as well, princess?"

Stella looked at the man incredulously. Just what was he suggesting? What did he take her for? She wasn't like that.

"You are a disgusting pig!" Oh sure, he was all that with his great ass and probably amazing cock. But he was also clearly arrogant, and he had straw-blond hair and she had never liked men with blond hair. The hair alone was a good—although not completely rational—reason to dislike him intensely, great ass or not. And, for God's sake he was fucking the bride of another man. What did that say about him? Like she would ever invite anyone like that to take her. She may have been as horny as all hell but she had her standards.

"Yet you're still here, which tells me you're either interested in me, or in her, or you haven't had sex in a very long time and you are jealous." Bingo, Kit thought as the woman's face went red. Oh yeah, he wanted the prissy woman in the ugly pink dress. Her full breasts alone commanded his instant respect and attention.

As if that was why she was in the room watching them. Stella stiffened in realization. Good God, she was still in the room watching them! Stella felt her face blush brightly. This was embarrassing and disgusting and lots of other things she could not even begin to name.

"Stel...it's not what it looks like." The bride moaned in delight as the man behind her slammed into her ass.

Stella looked at the bride's flushed face. She was wearing white for heaven sake. Wasn't she even going to make an attempt at purity and abstain long enough to get married to the groom? Did Stella really even know her best friend? Sure, in the past, Simone had been fairly wild and reckless when it came to men and sex. But this behavior was not the slightest bit appropriate on her wedding day with the groom in another part of the church. Oh good God. That's right, they were in a church. That made it even worse. Stella wasn't the slightest bit religious, but she knew this scenario had the makings of a one-way ticket to hell.

Stella held her hand up to forestall any explanations. It was none of her business what or who the bride did.

"I don't want to know, Simone. I'm leaving the room."

The bride screamed out loud in release.

"Way too much information..." Stella mumbled to herself as she hurried out. She had to get out before she did something dumb like beg the blond man for a turn.

"I'll see you later, princess," called Kit just before he came with a groan.

"In a pig's ear!" Stella yelled back as she slammed the door on them. Her thighs were sweating and her heart was pounding. She could not remember being so turned on in her life. She needed a man. But not just any man. She wanted the blond man. Once seen, he was not forgotten. But there was no way she would let that arrogant prick know she was interested in him. Want and need was one thing. Flinging your skirts up for someone like lover boy to take you was completely different. Stella liked to be in control. For the moment she would take matters into her own hands, so to speak. She was on edge and she needed release. She headed for the ladies room to let her fingers do the work.

"Stella, we have to get in our places." One of the other bridesmaids called.

"Bloody hell," Stella swore softly to herself. She clamped her legs together and gritted her teeth. No relief was coming soon.

* * * * *

Everyone agreed that the Sunday evening wedding ceremony and the reception that followed in the grounds of the old homestead reception hall at Narangba, had been lovely. The bride had looked stunning and the groom so handsome. Could there be a better matched couple than Simone and Peter? Everyone could tell they were in love.

"Everyone my ass," Stella Rowallan muttered to herself. She had stood beside the bride at the altar and looked at her best friend cynically as she had spoken her vows about trust and fidelity in her frosty white wedding gown, the same one that had been up around her waist only thirty minutes ago. Yeah sure, trust and fidelity. Whatever. It seemed words were cheap to the bride. She loved her friend but there were times she truly wondered about her.

Stella had been goggle-eyed when one of the groomsmen had turned out to be the blond man from before. He looked all suave and polished in his well-cut tuxedo. Apparently he was an old friend of the groom's. She had not seen him at the rehearsal dinner, but she'd known there was another groomsman who had been traveling interstate. She had made damn sure he had not been the one to walk her down the aisle. She had all but knocked another bridesmaid over to take the arm of another groomsman as the blond man came to claim her. There was no way she wanted to have anything to do with him, even if it was just to walk down the aisle. Stella wasn't shocked about walking in on them having sex. That was their choice. What shocked her was the tacky and un-groomsman-like behavior of fucking his friend's chosen bride. But what did she know?

"Anything wrong, Stel?" The bride whispered innocently as she smiled for the photographer who was taking their pictures.

"Jeeze, what could be wrong, Simone?" If Stella had to stand still for one more photograph she would puke. It had been a long day and the evening's wedding festivities had only just begun. Stella was still itching for some action to relieve the pressure within her. Just having the blond man standing and grinning at her at the altar had set her teeth on edge. She had tried to ignore him, but that was impossible since he kept his eyes glued on her face. Just looking at him reminded her of what he did to the bride and what she would have liked him to do to her. But that was irrational and she would get over it—eventually.

Stella still had that wet and tight feeling between her legs. She longed for something big and hard sliding inside her and grinding away the built up tension. Just the thought of it made her wetter. It had been so long since a man had touched her. She thought again about the blond man. No way. Not him. That would be asking for trouble. She would have to settle for some wine, maybe a bucket full, with a long straw. If she got drunk enough Stella would forget for the moment that she was a thirty-three-year-old frustrated spinster with an uncontrollable itch.

"Is this about what happened before?" Simone knew her best friend was on edge. She wasn't thrilled that Stella had walked in on them but it had happened and they both had to get over it.

"Oh you mean when some strange man was fucking you as you urged him on?" Stella said the words softly. No one else needed to know what a slut the bride was. Actually, to be fair, a lot of people did know of the bride's reckless past with men but the simple act of donning a white wedding gown seemed to erase any stain upon her reputation as she became virginal once again. Such was the magic of a wedding. What a joke, thought Stella.

"It was just farewell sex." Simone did not see a problem with it.

Stella looked at her friend incredulously. She was no defender of morality but even Stella had some basic principles she held to. Some things were right while others were wrong. Stella's motto was to do as few of the wrong things as she possibly could. Or if she did a lot of wrong things, either don't get caught like Simone did or have an

excellent, justifiable excuse, which Simone didn't. Although Stella wasn't married, she had some basic theory that getting married indicated you had chosen to place yourself off limits to everyone but your significant other. Or was she living in some fairytale existence?

"Farewell sex?" Was there such a thing or could you justify any suspect action by giving it a title?

Simone linked her arm with that of Stella's. They had been friends a long time. She didn't want to ruin it with one indiscretion.

"Yes, he is an old and dear friend from long ago." Kit Kincaid and Simone Shaw had had a wild fling a couple of years ago. Then she had met Kit's friend Peter and that was it for her. She had found her one. The man she wanted to be with for the rest of her life. And maybe having Kit one last time on her wedding day was wrong but she didn't regret it. Simone knew that it would never happen again. It was just an enjoyable one off. Both Kit and Simone knew that.

"So this Kit person is a friend to both you and Peter. A friend that you chose to screw on your wedding day to another man who you have promised to commit your life to." Simone was looking at her as if Stella were talking in another language. Was there something about this situation that seemed logical and acceptable? Something that Stella had missed? Okay, Stella could admit she might be a bit jealous, but what Simone did was wrong. "This dear friend of yours should have had the sense to say 'No' to a bride who should have had the sense to know better and keep her knickers on."

"God, you're sounding like my maiden Aunt Hattie, Stel." Simone sighed as she looked at her friend. She could normally have told Stella anything and she wouldn't have batted an eyelid, no matter how shocking. That was one of the things she liked about her. "It didn't mean anything and it doesn't count in the scheme of things. It was a one off and we used a condom so..."

"By all means, Sim, screw around if you want to. That's your choice." Stella interrupted her. She was sure whatever further reasons that were going to spring from Simone's lips would be excellent and creative, but the less information she knew, the easier Stella would be able to look the groom in the eye. "But it's tacky on your wedding day, especially when you stand up and doing the vestal virgin act promising truth, honor and matching dinner sets."

"What is wrong with you?"

"With me?" Stella's voice came out louder than she had expected it to. Everyone looked at them. Both she and Simone smiled back over sweetly as if they did not have a care in the world.

"Is this because you walked in on us?" Simone whispered, a small amount of guilt starting to sink in. Stella always had the ability to point out right and wrong to others while not necessarily doing the right thing herself. She was good at giving her opinion, whether it was asked for her not. It was an annoying habit of Stella's. No one wanted to

hear about wrong doing after the fact. "I did not think you were a prude, Stella Rowallan."

"You know I'm not. I just can't work out why you're bothering to do the whole white wedding thing. It seems hypocritical to me."

"Are you jealous?" Was that why he best friend was so riled up? "Do you fancy Kit? I can understand that. Any woman with an ounce of hormones would want that man between her thighs. That cock of his is sublime."

"Oh for God's sake. You are insane. I don't want to hear about him or his sublime cock. I just want to forget I saw what I did." But of course she wouldn't. It was emblazoned on Stella's mind and of course that was the reason she was snapping at her best friend. She was jealous. But Stella would never take up with some smiling fool of a man who clearly had the morals of an alley cat, sublime cock or not. She had wanted to slap him as he stood across from her at the altar smiling at her as if he was pleased with himself. "Let's just make a pact to forget it even happened."

Simone sighed happily. That would work for her. Even the pretence of guilt was hard to maintain for any length of time when she believed she hadn't done too much wrong in the first place.

"You look great in that dress." Simone looked at her best friend in the pink confection.

"Oh shut up! You know none of us do." There were four bridesmaids all trapped in the same ugly pink meringue dress. It had a strapless satin bodice that barely contained Stella's full breasts and a hooped crinoline type skirt that belled out in a fall of ruched tulle and down to the floor. It was a ghastly creation. They all looked hideous and each had already vowed revenge on the bride. None of the bridesmaids could sit down without either the back or the front of the ridiculous skirt flying up. "You are just pure evil, picking out such revolting dresses."

"That's what the bride does." Simone was pleased with her outfit and that was really all that mattered. It was her day, after all. "I can't have the bridesmaids looking better than me."

"Smile for the camera, girls," called the photographer.

Chapter Two

"Oh, frigging hell. Can't you sit somewhere else?" Stella looked at the smiling blond man in annoyance. This was wedding hell.

Why had she been placed next to him at the traditional long wedding table out front of the reception guests? What moron had organized that? That meant she had to be polite to the man. Stella didn't want to be nice to him. She didn't want to remember how he looked with his trousers around his ankles as he took the bride hard and fast. Just thinking of it made Stella wet, and that was bad when she could do nothing about it. And she did not want to be squirming beside him all evening thinking about that sublime appendage of his.

Kit looked down at the name card he had switched only moments before. He had no intention of spending the evening with anyone but Stella Rowallan. He liked women who were a challenge. A man could never have too many challenges in his life. From what little he had learnt from Simone, Stella was single and not one to take a tumble for just anyone. "'We'll see,'" Kit had murmured softly at Simone's words. Everyone had a weakness.

"Kit Kincaid." He said holding out his hand to her in introduction. He smiled as he watched the woman decide whether to take his hand or not. When she did, he held on tightly and subtly massaged it with his own. There was something about Stella Rowallan that held his attention. Kit was eager to find out more about her. She was not classically beautiful but she was a woman who kept a man looking and wondering.

What was this man doing to her hand? It was supposed to be a quick shake and release, yet he was gently stroking the back of her hand with his thumb and every nerve in her body was reacting. Clearly she had to have sex soon if a mere handshake had her on edge. That or maybe become a nun and devote herself to good causes and not think about sex. There had to be enough good causes to do that surely.

"Stella Rowallan, and I know who you are." Stella pulled her hand from his. "What sort of a name is 'Kit' anyway?" She looked him up and down as if she found him deficient in some way. It was a look that usually deflected interest from most men. He instead just looked amused.

Kit was amused by her dismissal of him. This woman was a pistol, one he would be interested in loading and setting off.

"My real name is Christopher, but friends call me Kit."

"Oh yeah? And what do your enemies call you?" Stella would use that option. If she actively sought to hate him now then she wouldn't be begging him to slide inside her later when she had had a couple of glasses of wine and her guard was down. Needing sex and having the wrong person give it to her was not going to get her

anywhere. Sure, she would be satisfied but she would hate herself for being so weak and needy.

Kit laughed at her words. She was definitely prissy, she definitely had attitude and she definitely wanted him, but was fighting it. Excellent. It would make his pursuit so much more interesting.

"Come on princess, I'm not that bad."

"Whatever." Getting into a discussion about him being bad was not on her agenda. Stella knew she was stuck with him for the evening. She planned on eating fast, drinking much and avoiding any interest he had in her. She was exceptionally good at ignoring people she did not like, so she knew she would have to apply this same diligence to lover boy.

Stella knew he was watching her intently as she hiked up the bell shaped hooped skirt to her knees and sat down awkwardly over one of the stools that had been specifically set up for the bridesmaids and their ugly skirts. She thrust her legs under the table and prayed that the table cloth stayed on and that the wine flowed generously, otherwise the guests would be getting a good look at her legs and she would be sober and cranky. She was well and truly over today. She hated weddings and suddenly being reminded that she had not had sex in such a long time did not help her mood. Stella did not need this blond guy to add to her general discontent.

Kit had taken a very long, appreciative look at Stella's legs. He had watched as she had hoisted her skirts up to sit down. He had seen all the way up to her creamy thighs. Under the sheer flesh colored thigh-high stockings she wore, he knew those smooth and pale legs would be excellent wrapped around his waist as his cock was buried deep within her. Kit's gaze roamed to her full breasts that were barely contained in the pink satin bodice. There was cleavage to burn and enticement enough for monk to forget about his vow of celibacy. His fingers itched to pull the fabric down and fondle and suck the luscious goods inside.

"That's an ugly dress."

Stella arched her eyebrows at him. She could feel his eyes burning into the fabric the clung precariously to her breasts.

"Try to imagine how little your opinion means to me, lover boy." She pulled up the bodice of the meringue dress as she grabbed an empty wine glass off the table. Where was the wine? She was going to need alcohol to get through this evening if she had to sit next to this man.

"It was just sex, princess." Kit leaned in close to her, his thigh pressing against hers under the table as dinner was served. He liked the pissed off way she called him "lover boy".

"Yes, I heard it was farewell sex and apparently, somehow that makes it right." Stella tried to move away from him, but there was nowhere to go and she didn't want it to look obvious that she was trying to avoid touching him. That muscular thigh

pressing into hers reminded her of the man's hot ass she had previously seen thrusting back and forward, as he serviced the bride.

"Do you have a problem with sex?" Kit wondered just what it would take to get this woman to open up to him.

"No." Only that she hadn't had it for a long time and the last time had been truly uneventful. What was the point of sex if you felt nothing? But she had no intention of telling him that. God knows where that discussion would end up. Most likely with her flat on her back, him inside and her urging him on to drive her over the edge. Stella looked at the blond man. Yeah, she instinctively knew he would make her feel something, something that would burn her deep down to the core and make her scream out loud as she came in his arms. And while lust was good and exciting and she could vaguely remember what it felt like, she wanted something more than just lust.

But what the hell was it that she wanted? That was the question Stella had yet to find an answer to. She eyed the blond man thoughtfully. Take a chance and go for what she knew would be the ride of her life, or be prim and proper and hate him? Stella decided to go with hatred. It would be the easiest emotion to go with in the long run. She just knew Kit would be an excellent lover. But he was also the sort of man you did dumb things over. Stella'd had enough life experience when it came to doing dumb things. She didn't need to add to it.

"You're awfully uptight, princess. I know a great solution to that."

"I just bet you do." And it had nothing to do with yoga or tai-chi, thought Stella. She was normally never this prickly with anyone but this man instantly had her back up.

There was something about her that appealed greatly to Kit. Even as he was taking Simone he was wondering about the woman who looked at him with such amazement. Despite the prickly surface, he had a definite need to touch and taste her. He had never felt so instantly attracted to a woman.

"We could be awfully good together. You know it's true, princess."

Stella snorted out loud at his words.

"Wow, do most women drop their knickers and bend over for you when you tell them that?" Stella asked sweetly. Yay. She spied the wine waiter approaching. Salvation cometh. Stella held out her empty glass. "And don't call me 'princess'."

"You're not most women and I'd like to get to know you before you drop you knickers for me." There were just some women that a man knew he wanted and she was one of them. Her face, her body and that attitude made Kit want to sling her over his shoulder and take her kicking and screaming to some remote location where he could fuck her until she could not stand and the only screaming she did was in release.

"Ain't ever gonna happen, sunshine." Stella took a slug of wine and turned to chat to the groomsman on the other side of her. He was boring, married and not the slightest bit hot and that was a good thing. Boring was safe. Hot was bad. She tried to zone out

and ignore lover boy beside her. But it was virtually impossible as he had no intention of being ignored. He was the pesky, persistent type who did not scare easily.

"The bride and groom look happy." Kit smiled as Stella jumped at the words he whispered into her ear. The fact that he had her so on edge told him to things. She was very aware of the attraction between them and it wouldn't take long to push her over the edge and into his arms.

"Gee, do you care if they are?" Even his hot breath on her ear turned her on. She had to get a grip. This man was a stranger to her. An annoying stranger with a great butt. She cursed herself mentally. *Forget the butt for God's sake, woman.*

"You know having sex with me is not going to ruin her life or yours."

Stella snorted out loud. Was this the most confident man in the world or what?

"Good to know especially as I am never going to be having sex with you, lover boy." She was bound and determined that this would never happen. She was keeping her panties on at all costs.

Kit grinned at her words. That was a challenge if he ever heard one. He never ignored a challenge.

As plates of soup were served, Stella felt movement under the table. Her skirt was suddenly being tugged further up her leg. She looked at Kit Kincaid, who in turn looked back at her innocently. A horrible thought occurred to her. Oh God, he wouldn't, would he? Stella's mouth dropped as she felt his hand starting to burrow further under her skirt. Bloody hell! This could and should not be happening. Did the man have no sense of decorum at all?

"Stop it now," Stella hissed softly at him, as she tried to push his hands away from what she knew was his objective. Although she did not want to create a scene, she would.

Kit's hand slid up the bare flesh of Stella's thigh seeking and finding the edge of her panties.

"Talk to me, princess," Kit said sotto voce, looking like he did not have a care in the world as his hand sought out the hidden, hot prize he knew awaited his touch.

Stella dropped her spoon and grabbed the table edge with one hand as she battled the other that was sliding into her panties.

"I don't want to talk to you," Stella returned in a furious whisper. "Stop it now."

Kit slid his long fingers under the fabric and stroked the soft curls between her legs. He felt Stella tense and heard her strangled gasp. She was soft and wet to the touch. Perfect.

"Agree to meet me outside now and I'll stop." He continued to push his way on into the moist folds between her legs, seeking entrance to the core of her.

Stella was trying desperately not to squirm.

"I'm not meeting you anywhere, mate." God, why hadn't she closed her legs when she had the chance? Of course the obvious answer was she subconsciously hadn't

wanted to. Damn subconscious. It had been seeking release from the moment she saw this man thrusting into the bride. Stella's eyes snapped open wide as his fingers found her clit, circling slowly. Uh oh...

"Please don't..." Stella, like any woman, was super responsive to any sort of stimulus on that tight bundle of nerves. Her toes curled up tightly in her shoes as she tried to maintain some semblance of control. One part of her wanted him to stop, as this was so wrong. But the other part of her knew that him touching her like this was so right.

"But I have to, princess. I want you to pay attention to me." Kit knew he had her complete attention now. She was biting her bottom lip and trying not to pant out loud. Kit wanted to drive her to frenzy with the rhythm of his fingers.

The fact that a complete stranger could stick his hands in her pants and drive her wild like this was both shocking and exciting. It was an unspoken fantasy of hers to have sex with a stranger. But she also knew that particular fantasy could get her into big trouble.

"Where outside?" Stella had to stop him now before she embarrassed herself. She was amazed no one was looking at them and wondering what was going on. The panic had to be written all over her face. Clearly she was a better actress than she thought.

"Hmmm..." Kit murmured thoughtfully as if trying to think about where they should meet. He was enjoying himself and the fact that this woman now had his undivided attention. He slid one finger, then another, inside her and felt her muscles instinctively wanting to suck him inside.

"Where?" Stella squeaked out, as the slow, insistent rhythm of his fingers inside her made her entire body tingle. Lord, don't let her have an orgasm at the wedding table.

Kit smiled. The slippery wetness coating his fingers indicated this woman was not as indifferent to him as he made out. His thumb continued rubbing the tight nub between her legs as his fingers slid slowly back and forth into her. The thought of making her come then and there made Kit feel powerful beyond measure.

"Don't do this to me." Stella knew she sounded pathetic and weak, but she was at the point of losing control.

The plea in her hazel eyes got to Kit. He wanted her submission but he didn't want to embarrass her. He stopped the friction on her clit.

"Meet me in the garden, princess." Kit reluctantly removed his hand from her panties. There was so much he wanted to do to this woman.

Stella sighed in relief. Social disaster had been averted by seconds. How did one recover from screaming out loud as they came in front of expensively dressed wedding guests? It was not something she ever wanted to find out.

"Fine...whatever." The garden was as good a place as any to kill him. She would figure out where to bury his body later. Stella hated losing control of any situation and for that he must die.

"See you soon." Kit stood up and smiled charmingly at her as if he was the perfect, well-mannered companion.

"Eat dirt and die," She hissed at him as she as watched him leave. She knew she should not meet him in the garden. That was a dumb move. But what would he do if she didn't? The man was willing to make her come in front of a room full of strangers. God knows what he would do if she refused to meet up with him. Stella decided it was better to get it over and done with.

Stella stood up, feeling wobbly on her feet as she smoothed her skirt down. She had an aching and itching between her legs that needed to be soothed. She clamped her legs together tightly to try and ease it. How dare Kit Kincaid treat her like that. She had been trapped and he knew it. And now the bastard had left her wanting more. After so long without sex her body was ready for any sort of action. But not with him. No way. She wasn't that desperate. Okay, that was a lie. She was verging on desperate, but she was determined to keep her knickers on. That was plan A. Plan B was her knickers off, his cock inserted inside her while she held onto his ass and urged him on. It would end with her hating herself later.

"Aim for plan A, Stella," she muttered to herself. Thankfully none of wedding guests noticed her or her wobbly legs as she trailed, Scarlett O'Hara-like, out of the reception hall. They were doing all the things wedding guest were expected to do. They were either drunk, talking fast and loud or eating whatever free food they could shovel in their mouths.

"I am never getting married..." Stella muttered to herself as she made her way out to the garden. What was the point of commitment if you screwed not only the groom, but also someone else on your wedding day? No real commitment there other than a commitment to having sex. Which wasn't a bad thing, but she figured marriage had to have more than just sex going for it.

Stella stalked out through the french doors and into the garden. It looked nice with its lights twinkling in the warm evening air. They had the enchanted theme down pat. However she wasn't interested in lights or enchantment. She was interested in telling the blond man just what she thought of him. She spotted him in the semi darkness and made an angry beeline for him.

"What is it you want?" Dumb question, of course, as the man had been in her panties only moments ago.

"Surely that's obvious. I want you." Kit had picked the most secluded spot he could find for his rendezvous for Stella. Kit planned to have sex with this woman. She knew that. He wasn't shy but he had a feeling she wasn't about to share herself with all and sundry and he liked that.

"What? Are you nuts? You just had sex with the bride and you're not even the groom. And now you want a bridesmaid?"

"Not just any bridesmaid, I want you." Kit removed his tie and unbuttoned the collar of his shirt.

"Well, call me crazy but I'm kind of picky who I have sex with."

Kit liked the outraged woman who stood with her hands on her pink hips and her breasts heaving, fit to burst out of their ridiculous restraint. There was a lot of contained passion in that pink-covered body, looking for release. It was kind of sweet to hear she did not just go for any man.

"So?" Kit moved toward her. His cock was hard and ready for action. He just had to get the object of his desires to be willing to receive him and she was almost there. They both knew it.

"So what?" Stella snorted incredulously at him. He was looking at her like he knew her every fantasy. Stella knew she should not be sucked in by that look. It was probably a look he had tried on hundreds of women with incredible success. And, if she was honest, Stella wanted this man despite every reason she shouldn't. She knew she was being pathetic and weak but she wanted him. And maybe that straw-blond hair of his wasn't that bad...Stella slapped herself mentally. What was she thinking? The man was a player. He expected to get her. Stella had no intention of being got by him. She had to get a grip on her wayward hormones.

"Don't you think it's trashy to be propositioning another woman so soon?" Stella started channeling her inner bitch. She had to keep control of this precarious situation. "It's hardly flattering to know you are just in heat for any woman and I am the next one available." Stella would never allow herself to be second choice.

"Again, princess, I don't want just any woman. I want you." He moved in close and smelt the hot scent of her body and knew he had to have her. "And secondly, I don't believe there is a school of etiquette on how soon a man is allowed to have sex."

"Well there should be." Even as she said the words, Stella knew they sounded ridiculous. She was not surprised that he laughed at her. What the hell did she do now? Stella wanted to stand her ground and look confident but Kit was awfully close and he looked much more confident. And yes, it was true that she liked confident, sexy men but she wasn't about to fall at this particular man's feet. Kit Kincaid was the sort of man your mother warned you about and yet secretly hoped that one day you would have at least just once. Didn't she deserve that? Shouldn't she honor her mother?

"I want you. I turn you on." Kit looked into her hazel eyes and knew it was true. "Admit it, princess, you like me despite all the reasons you shouldn't."

"You are so up yourself." Yes, damn it, it was true. She wanted him.

"I'd rather be up you."

For one moment, just the way he said those words sent such a rush of heat through her body and down between her legs that she thought she would have an orgasm.

"Wow, you really know how to sweet talk a woman don't you?" she choked out.

Kit looked down into her wide opened eyes.

"I know what I want and I make no pretence of it. So why lie?" His eyes moved down to her pink encased breasts, the fabric straining to cover them. He knew that with one tug of the material those breasts would pop out and into his hands.

"Don't even think about it." Although she was thinking and wanting the same thing. And why wasn't she moving away from the bad boy like any rational good girl should? Not that she was a good girl—although she thought about being good sometimes.

Kit lightly traced his fingers over the smooth skin of her shoulder. He felt the shiver from her body run up his hand.

"Come on princess, haven't you just wanted to have reckless, passionate sex with a stranger?"

"No." Well, yes, she had. It was something she had fantasized about in an abstract never-going-to-happen kind of way. But that was fantasy where sex had no complications and the man in question had not just fucked her best friend. "Keep touching me like that and I'll scream," she said. Okay, maybe that sounded a tad over-dramatic but she was losing control and trying to sound affronted seemed like the right thing to do.

"Oh yeah, you'll scream, but not in terror." Kit slid his hands down to her waist.

"Your confidence in your abilities is staggering." Stella tried to push his hands off. But the skin on his hands felt kind of nice against hers so it was only a half-hearted push. She had not been touched in such a long time. It was not like she was going to let him do anything to her anyway. Well, not much. She was still going with plan A, although plan B also seemed like a very fine option at the moment. Would plan B be so bad?

"That's not the only thing about me that is staggering." Kit pulled her to him tightly pushing the hooped skirt back from her body. His hips ground into hers letting his intentions be known.

Okay that was a mighty big erection and seemingly it was just for her. What to do, what to do? Be good? Be bad? Bad seemed like the best option when she knew she would feel good after knee wobbling sex with Kit Kincaid.

Kit could see in her eyes she was turned on as much as he was. His hands moved up to cup the full swell of her breasts, kneading the encased flesh gently.

"I want to suck your breasts."

"Uh..." Frigging hell. Stella had never had a man be so forthright with her and his hands felt awfully nice and strong on her breasts. What would a sane woman do at this moment when presented with a sexy man with a fully loaded cock just for her? "I shouldn't..." She couldn't let her angels down, could she?

That was all Kit needed to hear as he pulled at Stella's bodice.

"Says who?" Her large, full breasts popped out lush and firm just as he knew they would be. "Beautiful..." he murmured as his head dropped down and his mouth

captured one of her pink nipples and sucked on it hard. The groan from Stella was all the encouragement Kit needed.

"Oh God..." Stella pulled his head toward her breasts, all pretence and sensible reasons to stop gone as he tongued her nipples. No reasoning in the world could compete with the tight, wet tingling between her legs.

Kit fought to push up the fabric of her hooped skirts. He wanted to touch and taste every part of this woman. He reluctantly stopping sucking her nipple and looked at the obstacle before him. He looked back up at Stella. The look in her eyes told him he had her. Kit pulled down hard on the waist of the skirt and ripped it away from the bodice.

Stella gasped as the fabric fell around her legs leaving only her panties as the final barrier. She wasn't exactly sure whose hands pulled them down first but soon they were off.

Other than her thigh-high stockings, heels and bodice pushed down around her waist, Stella was completely naked and Kit liked what he saw. He kicked the skirt away as his lips descended on hers greedily.

Stella gasped as Kit's tongue thrust into her mouth and his hands grasped her ass and pulled her hips forward to meet his. There was no further need for pretence. She wanted this man now. Her hand instantly moved down to his trousers searching for the zipper that would free his cock. As she pulled his trousers down, his engorged cock sprang forth. She looked at him in amazement.

"Bloody hell." she panted out loud. He was huge. Simone was not exaggerating. His cock was indeed sublime. Stella wasn't sure she could take him to the hilt inside her but she was certainly willing to try. Her hand could not even encircle his cock completely he was so large. Stella licked her lips in anticipation. To hell with conscience and morality. This was going to beat both of those concepts hands down.

"Got a condom, lover boy?"

Kit searched through his trouser pocket and found one. He believed in being a Boy Scout, prepared at all times. He pushed Stella back onto nearby lawn furniture. The wooden table was high enough and strong enough for him to push Stella backward and slide inside her. As Kit lifted her up onto the table they both knew there was no need for further foreplay, they were more than ready for each other. They had been ready since the moment they met.

Stella watched as Kit ripped the condom packet open and rolled the thin rubber down the length of his cock. It made her hotter and wetter than she imagined possible to see him touching himself in such a way. Stella lay back on the table and opened her legs wide in invitation. She had never felt so wild in her life and she liked it.

"Are you sure you want to have reckless, passionate sex with a stranger?" Kit had never seen a more inviting sight that Stella Rowallan spread wide and ready to take him inside. He had never felt so potent in his life.

"Fuck me now, Kit Kincaid." All Stella wanted at that moment was him hot and hard inside her.

"Hell yes, princess." Kit pushed her back onto the table and grasped her hips pulling her in close to his straining erection. As Kit slid inside Stella he groaned at the tight wetness that grabbed at his cock. He pulled out and pushed in several times, smiling as he heard Stella whimper at his actions. He knew it would be exactly like this. Stella Rowallan was made for him.

Stella had had sex before but not like this. He was so hot and hard and he filled her completely. Stella wrapped her legs around his waist and pulled him down to kiss her. If she never had sex again, this one time would live in her mind forever. She grabbed Kit's ass pulling him to her, urging him on.

"Faster Kit," Stella moaned as the heat from his shaft sent off spirals of pleasure through her body. She wanted to explode, to dissolve, to collapse in a heap with a smile on her face. "Oh yes," Stella moaned as Kit started to increase the pace and pound into her.

Kit knew his control was shot the minute Stella told him to fuck her. He knew he wouldn't last long after that but that was okay. He had plans to savor this woman slowly later. This first time was just a teaser for what was to come. He watched as Stella arched her back in release and yelled his name out loud. She was definitely a princess in his eyes. He slammed into her one last time and groaned as he came.

"I can't believe I just had sex on a garden table where anyone could walk past." Stella clasped Kit as he collapsed forward onto her body.

"But no one did." Kit kissed her passionately and held her close to him, feeling her heart beat in time with his. He had never felt this good after sex. Nothing could possibly ruin this moment.

But fate, being fate, had other plans.

"Kit Kincaid I command you to return the idol," commanded loud female voice.

"Bloody hell, talk about timing."

Chapter Three

"What the..." They had company? How frigging embarrassing. How long had someone been watching? Stella tried to sit up at the sound of the voice but Kit was still inside her. She pushed at his chest.

Kit pulled out of Stella's body, hauled up his pants and turned to face the woman he knew would be standing there. The woman was always dramatic and always around when he least wanted her to be.

"Camille, how are you?" Kit didn't really care, but it was always best to be polite with your enemies. The redheaded woman didn't look happy with him but then he hadn't expected she would. They were not exactly friends. Kit was annoyed she had tracked him down to this wedding. He didn't like his enemies knowing his whereabouts so easily.

Camille Forveaux, the woman in question, looked at the blond man before her gaze strayed to the half naked woman furiously trying to cover herself. Camille had been that woman and not so long ago. Kit was a hard man to ignore when he wanted you. *Poor, deluded woman, she had no idea what was in store for her. Had she already gone ahead and fallen for the blond man?* She focused again on him. He was the reason she was there.

"I want the idol, Kit." She came and stood before him. The smell of his lovemaking lingered in the air. She looked at him dispassionately. He was a hot, sexy man who had used her and Camille had every intention of making him pay if he did not return what was hers.

Stella looked at the woman in amazement. She was tall and stunningly beautiful. She was dressed in a long, almost medieval-looking lavender gown and she had a royal blue cape, with a hood, wrapped around her shoulders. Who the hell dressed like that anymore? What was going on here? Stella looked at Kit. What was this "idol" thing she was talking about? And why did she have to be almost naked when this chat occurred? Talk about being at a disadvantage. She closed her legs and tried to act as nonchalant as the situation allowed.

"I don't have the idol, Camille." Kit had it, but he intended to keep it until he was good and ready to let it go. And it wasn't going back to Camille. She didn't own it any more that he did.

"Don't lie to me Kit. I know you have it. You slept with me to get it. You stole it from me like the thief you are." And that made Camille angry. The fact that he had used her to get the idol made her feel foolish.

Stella looked at the woman then at Kit. She wanted to say she wasn't shocked but she was. That Kit slept with the redhead didn't surprise her. This Camille person was stunning and from what little she knew of Kit, there seemed every likelihood he would have had sex with her. He was just that sort of man. But to think he did it to obtain something from the redhead? That was tacky.

"I want the idol back and I will give you twenty-four hours to give it to me."

That sounded like there was a definite unspoken "or else" in those words to Stella. The redhead didn't look like the sort of woman who allowed herself to be crossed easily. Stella was that sort of woman and she knew that look.

"I do not have it in my possession." But he knew where it was and he planned to move it quickly. If Camille had tracked him down so easily, it would take no time for her to find the idol.

"You better get it then." Camille was never going to believe another word Kit told her ever again. She had learnt her lesson. Lips that tasted so delicious also lied like the devil.

Stella knew a threat when she heard one. She wondered if Kit did. He didn't seem at all concerned or was that just an act? Weird-assed-looking Camille certainly was scary in a spooky, mystical way. Stella jumped as Camille suddenly leaned forward and looked carefully at her.

"I would hate to see anything happen to your woman."

Stella moved back as far as she could from the woman. She did not like freaky people or other women touching her.

"I'm not his woman and this has nothing to do with me." Wild, unrestrained sex didn't make for long term commitment.

"So you say my dear." How long would this one last or did she mean something to the blond man? That would be useful if she did. It was always good to have a bargaining tool when it came to Kit.

"I'm not your dear or anyone else's." Sure, she was mostly naked but that did not mean Stella lost her attitude.

"You know where to find me, Kit."

"Always a pleasure, Camille." *Dealing with her was anything but.*

Stella watched as the woman drifted off into the night.

"So, are you going to tell me what that's about?" Hell, Stella believed she had a right to know. It was not everyday you had sex with a man and his ex-turned up acting all weird talking about stolen idols. It was not like it was her favorite CD he nicked when they broke up.

"We have to get out of here." Kit grabbed her hand pulled off the table. He knew they were in deep trouble. Camille turning up out of the blue was not a good sign.

"What? Why?" Stella tried to pull her bodice up as Kit started pulling her along. "Stop."

"The sooner we leave the better, princess." Kit turned to look at her. Stella's breasts were bare and her pink nipples were swollen from his mouth. Kit felt it was a damn shame to cover up such beauty but he had no choice. He gently pulled her top up and grabbed her hand to pull her along.

"Why are we running?" Stella hated running and never more so than when she was completely bare assed doing it.

"Camille is pissed at me."

"Yeah, I got that but she has given you twenty-four hours to give her back this idol thing."

"I'm not concerned about her it's her freaky followers." Kit knew they had to be somewhere near. They always followed the woman they considered their leader. He knew if he dropped his guard one of them would attack. That he didn't have the idol with him would make no difference. They would try and beat him to a pulp just because they could. The people who followed Camille didn't excel in the imagination department.

"Followers?" The redhead woman had followers? Who had followers? "Is she part of a cult?" That would explain the weird outfit.

"Sort of and her followers aren't particularly happy with how I treated Camille." Kit wasn't frightened for himself. It was the fact Stella was with him. "They're not real rational people."

"Oh, yeah, and you are?" Stella kicked off her heels as they were impeding her progress to where ever it was Kit was taking her. "Why are you pulling me along? They're not upset at me."

"They would have seen us together, and that is enough reason."

Who ran from people like this? Sure, many a time Stella ignored her cranky, whining neighbor when he knocked on her door but she never actively had to run from someone.

"Is this normal for you?" *And if so, do I want to be involved with it?* Stella wondered to herself.

"Yeah." Kit stopped and looked around him. Where were they hiding? He remembered the last time her followers had ambushed him. It was two days ago. He had been leaving his apartment and they had appeared out of nowhere with knives in hand. Luckily for Kit his elderly next door neighbor had arrived at the same time as the nut jobs with the knives. Strangely they had some sense of honor and did not attack then because of the man beside him. But they had looked pissed about it. Kit doubted they would be so accommodating again.

Stella was thrilled Kit had stopped and given her a chance to catch her breath. Stella hated running. She wasn't built for it. It was a genetic thing. Running was for streamlined bodies with no breasts that bounced or thighs that strained to be remotely athletic. She would have liked to have said this short jog had given her the good

intention of setting up an exercise regime but that would have been a big fat lie. She would remain a sloth as even thinking about exercising was exhausting.

"You know as I am being literally dragged into this lover boy, I should know exactly what is going on." Like any woman worth her salt, Stella was incredibly nosey and needed to know all the details.

"It's a long story, princess."

Kit would have been insensible not to hear Stella panting heavily beside him as she stood trying to catch her breath. But he had to get to his car and get them away as soon as possible. He started running again pulling her forward.

"Slow down. I can't run as fast as you." Stella was gasping for air and slammed into the back of Kit as he stopped suddenly at his car.

Kit smiled momentarily as her full breasts squashed into his back. But as much as he wanted to touch those breasts again, now was not the time. He pulled out his keys and zapped the lock with the electronic car opener. He looked again at Stella's barely clad form. The curls of soft hair between her legs guarded a hot, wet entrance that he wanted to visit again. He could feel his cock hardening with excitement. He had to cover temptation until he could get them to safety. Kit whipped off his jacket and handed to her.

Stella gratefully accepted his jacket. She was amazed it had taken him so long to realize she was half-naked. Or did he drag naked women along a lot? Luckily, the coat was long enough to cover everything it had to. She snuggled down into the leftover warmth from Kit's body. She refrained from going all gooey and smelling the fabric for his scent. *Get a grip Stella. It was just sex, after all.* And, seemingly, sex with a thief. That was a first for her and not necessarily one she was proud of. But she could live with that. She had done dumber things.

Suddenly an explosion close by rocked the stillness of the night.

"Bloody hell!" Stella shrieked as she clutched Kit's hand. "Is that them?" Another explosion belted through the darkness. "Just give the idol thingy back now," Stella yelled as she gratefully accepted being pushed into Kit's car. Under normal circumstances she would have pushed back at such an action. But these were not normal circumstances and her safety was what mattered most to her right now. She scooted across the soft upholstery and watched Kit slam in behind her and start the car. Who exploded things like this at people? Initially, Kit had pissed her off, but she wouldn't have tried to make him explode. Okay, maybe she would have but for the fact she didn't have the ability. Another explosion bounced off the car as Kit floored the accelerator and tore through the gates of the reception centre.

Stella buckled up her seat belt and grabbed the door handle.

"Slow down."

"We have to put distance between them and us."

When did she become an "us" Stella wondered? She had never been part of an "us". And she had never been involved in a car chase before either and she did not

want to start now. Who were these follower people? And what were those explosions? Did they have the ability to send exploding power balls from their hands or was that just on television that happened? What the hell was she mixed up in? She should have known that there would have been a catch to having great sex.

"Do these weirdos have magic powers or something?" Those explosions were not just attempts to attract their attention. They meant business with them.

"Nah, I suspect there just a bunch of big, nasty, demented freaks throwing fire crackers at us." Kit didn't believe in magic and he wasn't about to start now.

Stella looked behind her in the darkness. No one seemed to be following them but then she was new to all this being chased stuff so what did she know? One thing she knew was the chased always checked behind them in the movies so it seemed like the logical thing to do.

"What is this idol thing?" she yelled suddenly at a grim faced Kit. She surprised herself by yelling at him but then she had surprised herself by having sex with him. It was a night of surprises and she should be allowed to yell if she wanted to.

"It's an ancient artifact from the Middle Eastern town of Beldarq. It is believed to be thousands of years old." Kit concentrated on getting them as far and as fast as he could away from Camille's people. He knew they would find him again soon enough. "I may have acquired it."

Stella snorted out loud at his words. She knew a euphemism when she heard one.

"Oh please, there is no "may have" about this. Let's just call a spade a spade, shall we? You stole this idol thing. There is no "acquired" about it." Stella tried to picture in her mind a map of the Middle East. She had never heard of the town of Beldarq. But then, the Beldarqians had probably never heard of Brisbane.

Kit liked Stella Rowallan more and more with each minute that passed. She was mad at him but she was coping exceptionally well under the circumstances. Not a lot of women could be half naked and do that.

"Stole is an ugly word, princess."

"But it's an accurate one in this case." Stella relaxed enough to sink her butt into the soft upholstery. Was it leather? Did being a thief pay so well? She had only got a brief glimpse of the car Kit had pushed her into but it was enough to know it was sleek and expensive and not her kicked in and rusted sedan. "Spill the idol story, lover boy."

Kit smiled momentarily. He liked it when she called him "lover boy" in that pissed-off tone. It was sexy and hot and he wanted to jump her. He momentarily contemplated pulling the car off to the side of the road and doing just that.

Stella could tell what was on Kit's mind by the look he shot at her.

"That's not going to happen again." Their one time together had been so damn good that Stella knew if she allowed it to happen again she would become enslaved by this man. Frequent sex had the ability to do that to you. She had a belief that the second time with a man was always more meaningful and was what sucked you in completely.

"Oh, it will happen again." Kit was certain of that. The desire and passion between them was not something that could be ignored.

"Dream on. Oh demented one," Stella returned lightly, knowing she could quite easily fall for someone like Kit Kincaid. But where would that get her? She had only known him for a few hours yet she knew he was not person you married or contemplated a long term commitment with. "Tell me about this idol thingy." It was time to shove sex into the background. Stella was sure it would rear up again soon enough.

"It's complicated." Kit didn't have to look at Stella to know she was rolling her eyes at his words. Her unladylike snort was enough to tell him she needed to hear more. "The idol's not mine and it's not theirs."

"So essentially it belongs to history and you all have your sticky paws on it." What was that time old saying? No honor among thieves? It appeared to be correct. One thief would steal from another to get something for profit. Stella didn't doubt for a moment this idol was worth money. "So, Camille and her mates want it, you have it and they are obviously prepared to kill for it."

"Camille won't kill me. Maim me perhaps."

"Well, how comforting to know that," Stella murmured cynically. Who were these people? Who was Kit that he would accept this woman would try and attack him but not kill him? That was not normal. There were people she loathed but she didn't consider attacking, though God knows some of them deserved it. "So what's the story with the redhead?" Stella looked at Kit. He was mad if he thought she would accept some half finished explanation from him. "Well?"

Kit sighed. He did not want to get Stella any more involved in this than he had but he knew she wasn't going to leave it alone.

"I may have seduced her to get idol."

"May have?" Stella arched her eyebrows at him cynically. "Is this similar to how you seduced me to have sex with you?" Though, to be fair, Stella could not blame him entirely. She had to acknowledge it hadn't taken much to seduce her.

"You wanted me, princess." Kit knew that. There were some people who were just meant to be together. "Don't be getting all prissy about it now." Kit turned and smiled a knowing smile at her.

"I'm not prissy, and wanting is beside the point." *What was the point again? That smile of his threw her completely. It was an invitation to have excellent sex.* Stella crossed her legs tightly as she felt a surge of warmth shoot into her pussy. Now was not the time for any sort of sex...maybe later but not now. Stella shook her head. What the hell was she thinking? Sex with him again? Was she mad? Possibly.

"This Camille woman is out for vengeance. Haven't you heard about the woman scorned bit?"

"That idol is worth a great deal of money to the right people," Kit told her. "And money and women are two fatal attractions for me."

Oh, again that smile. The man could make the most devoted spinster fling up her skirt and beg for him to slide on inside.

"Don't try that charming crap on me. I'm not falling for it again." Her words sounded tough. Could she live up to them?

"Sure, sure..." Kit murmured not believing Stella for a moment. She was hooked just as he was and they would both fall for whatever the other offered.

Stella narrowed her eyes sharply at him. Now he was just making her cranky with his smart ass "I know better" attitude.

"Where are we going?" She looked outside the car as it sped along Gympie Road. Where were they? She could see the Brisbane city lights way up ahead but Stella had no idea where Kit was heading to.

"I have to get the idol." Kit needed to push forward his plans for the idol.

"To give it back to the rightful owner?" That seemed to make sense to her. Then Kit wouldn't have a strange woman chasing him and Stella could go home and put on some underwear.

"No, to sell it." Kit heard Stella's incredulous intake of breath. "And don't worry, I'm fairly sure we're not being followed. I've covered my tracks." Well, in truth, Kit hoped he had. He was after all dealing with fanatics who were capable of almost anything.

"If they found you at the wedding then clearly you're not much good at covering your tracks, are you?" At least there were no more explosions and that was a good thing as far as Stella was concerned. She wanted to have a look at this idol thing. What was so special about it that everyone wanted it?

"I need your help, princess."

"To save your ass?" That much was obvious to Stella.

"Isn't it worth saving?" Kit grinned wolfishly at her. He could still remember the feel of Stella's hands on his ass urging him on as he slammed inside her.

Damn straight it was a fine backside and worth saving but did she want to get caught up in some weird stuff like this?

"Who exactly is Camille?" Stella needed much more information before she jumped in blindly. Her life was normally exceptionally boring and the biggest risk she took was deciding which bill she could put off paying until the next pay.

"She's a witch, or she thinks she is." It made no real difference one way or the other to Kit. People could do or be what they wanted as long as they left him to his own devices. He had the idol and she didn't. There was no magic in that. That had everything to do with time management and street smarts.

Stella's eyes opened wide in surprise at this statement. The woman was a witch? Stella had watched *Charmed* but she could not remember seeing any witch looking like a medieval throwback. Maybe she had missed some episodes.

"So she's a witch and you're a thief." And Stella's little world had taken a sharp unexpected turn in a matter of moments and she wasn't too sure how to deal with that.

Kit nodded his head. He continued speeding toward his destination. He had to get the idol and get it fast.

"That's pretty much it in a nutshell. I acquire things people want and I sell them to the highest bidder."

"So you don't feel bad about stealing things?" For someone to admit straight out they were a professional thief was not an everyday occurrence. And the weird thing was she felt completely safe with this man. Maybe that had a lot to do with the fact that she had nothing worth stealing. That or she felt there was more to him than just charming, gentleman thief. Stella shook herself mentally. What was wrong with her? She would be falling in love with him next.

"It's how I make my living." Kit did not feel guilty about the business he was in. He hurt no one and he made a nice profit. Having a conscience was not a luxury he allowed himself.

"Are you some sort of poor man's Indiana Jones?" It was not an everyday thing to be chased for a stolen idol by a supposed witch.

"Something like that." Kit laughed at Stella's romantic description. He had a feeling she could make him laugh at a lot of things. He needed a break from the never-ending profit and loss cycle. Just being at Peter and Simone's wedding had made Kit realize he wanted something more in life. He looked thoughtfully at Stella.

"What?" Stella felt a shiver run up her spine at his searching look. The man had seen her naked for God's sake. What else was he looking for?

"Nothing," Kit murmured. "Just thinking about possibilities."

They were in the heart of Brisbane city now. The streets were fairly quiet but then it was after nine pm and after a certain time, Brisbane pretty much died down. It was just a big city with the heart of a country town. Only people going to and fro from the nightclubs and Treasury Casino could be seen.

"Where is this idol?" Stella asked, interested to know where a thief hid his booty.

"Idols," Kit informed her.

"There is more than one? And do I even want to know?" Stella shook her head and decided she was no longer going to be surprised at anything he told her. Witches, thieves, an ancient idol or in this case idols.

"There's the original and the two fakes."

"Uh-huh. No, don't tell me." Stella raised one finger to silence the explanation she knew would be coming. "Let me guess. Your plan is to flog all three off and make a huge profit without the buyers realizing they have a fake."

Stella was smart. Kit liked that. Smart and sexy was an unbeatable combination.

"That's right." Kit looked at her quickly. "I'm fascinating aren't I?" He grinned widely at her.

"You're a piece of work all right." Stella had to admit there was something about this man. He had no conscience whatsoever. Stella knew in theory people weren't supposed to steal and they were supposed to be accountable for what they did yet what Kit was saying didn't bother her as much as it should. What did that say about her? That sex with him had scrambled some brain cells? That her moral code was shot to hell after one fantastic orgasm? That seemed to be the most likely explanation. Sex screwed with your mind.

"Come on princess, you like me." Kit kept one hand on the steering wheel and ran his other up along her bare leg. He smiled as he felt Stella jump in response.

Stella swatted his hand from her leg. It felt good and that was a bad thing. How could she even contemplate having sex again with a self-confessed thief who had put her in danger? The answer may have had something to do with the fact that Stella had never felt more alive in her life.

"Great sex does not make a relationship."

"Yes, it was damn good wasn't it?" Kit was looking forward to getting all hot and naked with Stella again soon.

"Where are we?" Stella snapped in irritation at herself. She had to get a grip or she would be gripping something hard and long of his very soon and begging him to slide that cock back inside her.

"We are at Roma Street train station," Kit reported as he drove the car into the covered car park.

Stella looked at him incredulously.

"You put the idols in a railway locker? How obvious is that?" It was done in all the movies. She expected the master thief to have some devious hiding place.

Kit parked the car in the closest parking bay to the door. He wanted a quit exit.

"Sometimes the most obvious places are the best."

Stella looked at him cynically.

"What is that, Thieving 101?" Stella watched as Kit got out of the car and moved around to open her door. She arched her eyebrows at him questioningly. "Why do I have go with you?" It made so much more sense to sit in the car or maybe get out and hail and taxi and go home. Besides she didn't want to be walking around Roma Street station at night bare assed and dressed only in a man's jacket. She would be mistaken for either a drunken party girl or a working girl.

Kit pulled Stella out of the car. Her feet were bare and she was doing her best to pull down the jacket to cover her bare ass.

"Camille's people have seen us together. I can't leave you alone. It's natural they assume that we are a couple."

"But we are not a couple." Maybe they were a couple of nitwits running helter-skelter through the night but not an actual relationship type couple. How weird would it be to be coupled with Kit Kincaid, thief? How would you even explain his occupation

to people at parties? And why was she even contemplating that anyway? "And who are 'they' again?"

"'They' are Camille's coven." Kit grabbed Stella's hand and pulled her along with him. He had got her into this mess and he had every intention of protecting her.

"I see. They're a coven of witches?" Stella didn't really see but sometimes it was easier to go with something than against.

"Yes, and as for you and I being a couple, I think we'd make a great couple." It was not beyond Kit's imagining. Stella Rowallan was exactly the type of woman he wanted for life.

Stella scoffed out loud at his words.

"You steal things for a living. Your judgment is screwed." They were entering the main foyer of the train station that led to the subway and the train platforms. Stella would have been blind not to notice the people who stared at her bare feet and barely covered backside. "What are you looking at?" she snapped at one obvious tourist, who in turn dropped his eyes. "And keep 'em there," Stella hissed in satisfaction. She heard Kit's laughter. Yeah, it was real funny for the thief. "You try walking around bare assed and keep a sense of humor, lover boy."

"Don't scare the tourists, princess. Remember, Brisbane thrives on tourism." Kit had every intention of being bare assed with Stella as soon as he got the idol back to his home.

"Just shut up." Honest to God what more did she have to put up with?

"Are you okay?" Kit knew Stella had been through a lot and he was concerned for her. They have only just met but Kit knew time meant nothing when you met the right person. He was a man who lived on his instincts and his instinct about Stella was she was more than just a woman he met and had sex with. He also knew he would freak Stella out if he mentioned that. But he could not deny the feeling that being with her brought him. He felt a strange sense of wholeness he had never felt with anyone else before.

"Do you care?" The look of soft concern in Kit's eyes momentarily threw her off balance. She almost believed he cared for her as more than an acquaintance. But that of course was ridiculous. The only thing that had between them was sexual chemistry and that could burn out mighty quickly.

"I do care."

"I'm as fine as this situation allows." Stella had the strangest feeling that this thief of hers actually meant it. Or maybe she was reading far too much into the soft chocolate brown eyes that held hers. Stella knew they had to get back to the subject at hand. "Have you ever thought about just giving the idol back to whomever you stole it from?" That seemed like it would solve the whole people chasing them thing.

Kit headed hand and hand with Stella toward the lockers. He could not care less what people thought of him or Stella. They were not important and they were beneath Stella's touch anyway.

"Camille stole it, and I stole it from her."

"Great, semantics. I suppose if you steal from a thief it's not a theft then?" Stella knew she could have easily pulled her hand from Kit's, but it felt kind of nice and she was tired, and what did a little bit of support from another human being hurt? Stella knew if she looked at it like that she could justify holding his hand.

"Something like that." Kit smiled at her words. Stella was taking the whole thing about him being a thief in stride. Not a lot of people, let alone women, could find that the slightest bit acceptable. Yet, Stella was becoming more intrigued than horrified.

"And where did the witch woman get it from?"

"The Queensland Museum." Kit explained about the relics that had been collected in the desert outside the town of Beldarq. They had then been sent on a cultural tour around the world, being loaned to countries like Australia to put on display.

"Well. I suggest the most logical thing would be to take it back to the museum then." Did one knock on the main door and hand it back or what? She wondered why she had not heard on the news that an ancient artifact had been stolen from the Queensland Museum. It would have been a big deal to the State and to the people of Beldarq. Surely it was newsworthy?

Kit instinctively knew Stella was not someone who broke the law, although she might bend it to her own rules.

"It's not that easy. There is already a fake idol in place at the museum." Kit felt Stella momentarily pause in her step at his words. "When Camille took the original, the museum was embarrassed and had to replace it with a fake. Essentially they wanted to stop questions until they could find who took the original."

"That's why it wasn't on the news."

"Correct, only a few people know it was nicked and all those people want it for their own reasons." Kit looked around him warily, the fine hairs on the back of his neck rose in warning. He moved them along quickly. "The idol is on loan from Beldarq. And they cannot afford to add to the unrest on the Middle East right now due to the global political situation."

"I see..." Stella didn't really, but this wasn't her game after all. She did, however, understand that pissing off any one in the Middle East was not a smart thing to do at the moment.

"I had several buyers who had heard of the theft and wanted the real idol. I managed to track down the most likely thief." Kit had known Camille for a very long time. He knew what she liked to acquire for her own. And yes, he had seduced her, but Camille had been more than willing. They both had known what was going on.

"So it is true it takes a thief to know a thief."

"Exactly."

It was not a normal conversation between two people who barely knew each other but there it was – evidence that Stella wasn't normal.

"So what's with this idol that so many people want it?"

Kit felt the same tingling sensation on the back of his neck. He was a man who lived on his wits. Something did not feel right. Kit looked around him. He could not see anyone overly suspicious but he intuitively knew they were being watched. It had to be Camille's followers. Like everyone, Kit had a long list of enemies but he knew of no one else that was pissed off enough to follow him.

"The idol a fertility statue," Kit explained as he hurried Stella along to the lockers. "It's supposed to make men extra virile and women more fertile. It's supposed to have some magical aphrodisiac qualities similar to all those strange herbs and ground up animal horns that people pay money for."

"So this essentially all comes down to sex." And sex sold and people did dumb things for it. She was living proof of that, idol or no idol.

"Sex and money and both make the world go round. Some people would kill for this idol." Kit felt Stella start to pull away from him.

"Well, this has been fascinating but if you would be kind enough to lend me train fare, I'd like to go home." It had been a long day and she was sure the thief could handle the whole idol in the locker thing without her.

Kit could not have Stella leaving now. It had something to do with protecting her but more to do with the fact he could not allow Stella Rowallan to walk out of his life. What Kit felt for her was strong and true, and he needed to investigate what he was feeling further. It was just more than the usual thrill of sex. She could not leave him now. Not when they had only just met.

"I need you."

Stella looked up at him in surprise. Kit sounded like he meant it. But then he was a thief and *ergo* a liar, so what could she believe?

"What for?" She had never had anyone needing her before. How did she go about being needed?

"What if I return the idol?" He was surprised at the words that came out of his mouth. Kit had up until a moment ago had every intention of selling it.

Well, this was a surprise, thought Stella, her bullshit detector on alert knowing there had to be more going on. A man who one moment was out for profit and the next throwing it out the window. That did not compute.

"What about the other two fakes?" Stella asked skeptically.

"I could give one to Camille to get her off my back."

"Do you think she's that dumb?" From what little she saw of the redhead she didn't strike Stella as the gullible tell me anything type and I'll believe it. Surely she would know if she were handed a fake.

"Damn!" Kit swore suddenly and pushed Stella into the nearby automatic photo booth.

Chapter Four

"We're being followed." Kit quickly pulled the ugly grey curtain across the door and looked at Stella. It was a cramped and crowded with both of them standing, though Kit didn't mind being crowded by Stella. She could crowd him any time. He opened the curtain slightly and spotted a couple of Camille's people heading in the opposite direction to them. Kit knew they just had to sit it for ten or so minutes until the coast for clear. Camille's people weren't smart. They wouldn't look for too long. They were the type of people who needed a flashing neon sign saying "hiding place" or they would move on. Kit counted on their stupidity. He sat down on the small bench that was set back against the wall of the photo booth. He looked at the generic camera lens before him. An idea came to mind. If they had to sit it out and wait then they may as well have some fun. He smiled at Stella.

Stella felt suddenly nervous at that smile, which was insane because he had seen her naked and he had been inside her body so it was not like there were any surprises there. She had never felt like this with any other lover. Lover? Was that what Kit was? Did a quick roll in the hay—or in this case a blinding moment of hot sex on a garden table—make them lovers? What was it about this blond man that threw her composure out the window? Why did she want to do dumb and delicious things with him when he smiled at her like that?

"I didn't think these photo booths existed anymore." The ugly, antiquated boxes had once been a popular and convenient way of getting a quick, cheap and usually ugly photo for purposes of identification. With the advent of digital cameras Stella just assumed they had all disappeared. But as Roma Street railway station was a major tourist transit area, it probably seemed feasible to have one still in operation. It was also probably some sort of quirky tourist thing. A lot of people had fond memories of squeezing friends into one of these photo booths and taking silly photos. She and Simone had certainly done so. Though being squeezed in with Kit was a completely different feeling.

"So how long do you think we have to wait in here?" It was hard to make polite conversation when she had no underwear on. And the man who was sitting so close to her was aware of that. Plus she knew he was hoping to take advantage of this fact.

"Sit down." Kit tapped his hand on his thigh. He knew Stella was nervous and he thought it was cute. "Take a seat. We may be here a while."

Stella looked at him skeptically. Sit on the lap with that huge, delicious cock? Was she that big a thrill seeker? And what could either of them do about it in a photo booth anyway? It was hardly a private place to even contemplate having sex in. Stella felt a little calmer after having this thought.

"Who's following us? One of Camille's mob?" When in doubt, shift the topic to safer ground was Stella's motto.

"They seem to have the knack of being everywhere. I suggest we sit here for fifteen minutes or so and then head to the lockers." The sooner Kit had the idol and Stella out of Roma Street the better.

"You honestly think they won't look in here, lover boy?"

Stella had her hands on her hips again, looking all prissy, and Kit wanted her more than ever. Was she aware that when she put her hands on her hips the jacket rode up and he could see the soft skin of her inner thighs and the curls on her pussy? Kit thought. But he wasn't about to tell her that. Why ruin the show?

"It was either here all the men's toilets, and I know they would look there." He tapped his thighs again. "Sit down. Or are you scared, princess?"

"Of you? No." *Of me and what I may do? Hell yes.* Stella contemplated her options. Leave the photo booth and beg for train fare home in her half naked state? That seemed not only embarrassing but also possibly something she might get arrested for. Stay with Kit and sit calmly on his lap and avoid having sex with him. It seemed doable to Stella. He could hardly take her in a cramped photo booth where anyone could stick their head in for a look. Though the possibility of that happening seemed strangely exciting to Stella.

"Come on, princess, I'm not going to bite...unless you want me to." Kit saw Stella's eyes narrow warily. "I will be a perfect gentleman and only do what you want me to do."

Stella would have liked to have said that made her feel so much safer, but it didn't. She had a feeling Kit could make her do all sorts of things she never planned on.

"No funny stuff, right."

"My word of honor." Kit only planned on doing exciting stuff.

Stella rolled her eyes at this. She was tired and her feet hurt. Being able to sit down for a couple of minutes would be welcomed. She took a deep breath and sat down on sideways on Kit's lap. It seemed the safest alternative.

"So what do we do now?" Even saying the words sounded dumb when Kit was looking at her in an "I could be so good for you in an awfully wicked way". He was as yummy as cheesecake but without the calories. Now there was a product worth marketing.

Just knowing Stella was all bare assed sitting on his lap made his cock instantly jut up in excitement. There was no way Kit could let this moment pass him by.

"I know what I want to do." His hands encircled her waist as his tongue slowly licked the sensitive flesh near Stella's ear. He loved the taste of this woman.

Stella moaned softly. She could feel the steel rod of his erection poking into her bottom.

"I want to be inside you again, princess. Once was most definitely not enough." Kit blew against the wet flesh on her neck. The shiver that ran through her body, told him all he needed to know.

"In a photo booth?" Stella gasped, both at the thought of how wrong it would be and yet how good it would feel to have him inside her again. "Are you kidding me?" Though, the thought of having sex with Kit Kincaid with people passing innocently by outside was actually getting less shocking by the second. But did good girls do that sort of thing? There must be some sort of rule on that? She would have to remember to ask when she next met a good girl she could ask. Though good girls were few and far between these days.

"Why not?" Kit breathed softly into her ear.

Stella closed her eyes for a moment and savored the surge of warmth shooting through her veins. She put her hands on his broad shoulders to steady herself. The man was a drug. And it seemed like a shame to let that long, hard cock prodding insistently into her ass go to waste.

"There's no privacy and anyone could walk in." If Stella thought up enough good reasons it may just stop her from having sex with Kit again. That or she would feel better for having at least made an attempt to be good when Kit was once again hot and tight inside her.

"But what's what makes it so excitingly, princess. It's that possibility of getting caught." Kit felt Stella squirm against his lap. He held his breath and counted backward. He wanted to be deep inside her when he came. "Besides, the curtain goes to the floor."

"Oh yeah, that makes a big difference—a flimsy barrier that could be pulled aside easily." Stella looked down as Kit searched his pockets. Idly, for no real reason of course, she wondered if the Boy Scout had another condom hidden away in one of those pockets. "What are you doing?"

"We might as well take a photo of us while we're in here."

"What for?" Strangely enough a photograph of Kit sounded like a good idea. Stella knew she might never see him again after this night. It would be nice to have proof that he had once existed. She could then pull the photo out when her great-nieces and nephews came to visit Crazy Aunt Stella and bore them with stories about a blond-haired thief she had once had a wild night of passion with.

"I want to immortalize the moment so to speak." Kit reached forward and slid coins into the money slot. His hands then went back to Stella, sliding up to her breast, flicking jacket buttons undone as he went.

"What are you doing?" Stella started swatting at his hands as the jacket slid to the ground. He wanted to take a photo of her naked. She knew she should object but the thought of her naked and being photographed on his lap was way too thrilling to object to. She was officially becoming a total slut and she didn't care.

"Nothing that you don't want me to do, princess," Kit promised as his hands ripped apart the torn pink fabric of what was left of the bodice. He caressed her bare breasts eagerly. No other woman felt like Stella Rowallan. She was all woman and she belonged to him.

Stella moaned softly. Why was it that some men knew how to touch a woman in exactly the right way while others did not have a clue? Kit Kincaid obviously had a lot of experience with women and it showed and Stella had to admit experience was an excellent thing.

"You are not going to take of photo of me like this." Her words were only a token resistance. She watched as he reached over and pressed the button. Both alarm and excitement surged through her. He was a stranger, albeit a sexy one, but should she? Could she? Who did she have to account to for her actions in life? Only herself and this felt right to her.

"Don't you find this exciting? Don't you want a photo to see how you throw back your head and moan softly when I suck your breasts? I know how much you like to have your breasts sucked." Kit sucked down hard on one taut pink nipple. The photo flash went off.

Stella had been wet with wanting before, but now she was positively slippery and aching for action. Was it Kit's words, the suction of his mouth, the fact she was being the photographed or a combination of all of them that had her thighs sweating? Whatever it was she grabbed his head and held him to her. The flash continued to click several more times but Stella no longer cared. All she cared about was having this man suck her breasts.

"Undo me," Kit ordered softly as his mouth found hers and he kissed her hungrily.

Stella decided to agonize later on over all the many reasons not to have sex in public with only a curtain covering them. Later she would drink white wine and eat Tim Tams and feel bad and good at the same time. But right now she just needed this man inside her. She reached for his fly and freed his cock. It sprang out ready for action. She caressed the tight skin softly as she kissed him back with a wildness she wasn't aware she possessed.

Kit pulled out his last condom and placed it into her hand. He tensed as Stella slowly rolled it over his hot straining flesh, taking her time and enjoying his impatience.

"Lift up," Kit ordered as he maneuvered Stella so she was facing away from him and facing the camera. "Slide on down me, princess. " His cock was ready to take her to the hilt.

Stella had never had sex like this before. She backed back and slowly impaled herself on his cock.

"Oh my God," Stella hissed out through clenched teeth. Her first instinct had been to scream with relief but then she remembered where she was. She arched her breasts forward and ground her ass down onto him. His cock burned sweetly inside her.

"I want a photo of this." Kit shoved the money into her hands.

Stella no longer cared. She was no longer in control. Kit was, and she was too blinded by her aching need to have him any way she could to care. She leaned forward, keeping Kit inside her as she slipped the coins into the machine and pressed the button.

Kit grabbed Stella's rounded hips and helped her ride him slowly. The camera flashed but neither cared. All they cared about was the moment and each other. It was a slow, hot fuck suspended in time and driven on by mutual need.

Stella panted as Kit's pace increased. She had never felt so womanly and sensual in her life. She felt the first spasm of pleasure shoot through her body. She bit her lips to keep from screaming out loud. Kit turned her head and kissed her hard, catching the scream in his mouth. She felt like she was going to explode into a million pieces the pleasure was so intense. She fell back against Kit and felt his body tense as he came hard within her.

Kit wrapped his arms around her tightly. He did not want the moment to end.

"Bloody hell, princess, you are fabulous to make love to."

Stella stiffened in his arms, as Kit's words broke through the sexual mist that clouded her mind. "Make love"? Did he actually believe that was what they were doing? This was sex. Great sex, but just sex. There was no love attached. They were strangers, for God's sake. Stella swore softly at herself.

"What's wrong?" Kit watched as Stella stood up and off his body. He had felt her stiffen up as if alarmed at something.

What the hell was she doing? Stella was horrified to think she was becoming like one of those women who took any man at random for sexual gratification. She wasn't a slut, so why was she suddenly acting like one? She had never before behaved like this with any other man. Usually it was average sex with a man she had dated for a while and then it all fizzled out. Stella never felt anything much after having sex. But she was feeling a lot of stuff now that was clouding her judgment. She was confused.

"Nothing," Stella murmured pulling up the now useless bodice and dragging on the jacket.

"Are you feeling guilty?"

Kit had hit the nail on the head. Stella was not a moralistic, bible bashing, granny knickered do-gooder who believed sex was only for married people. But she was back to feeling bad that she had totally lost control with a stranger so easily. What did that say about her? Was she desperate or indeed a slut?

"Why would I feel guilty?" she asked. But she was feeling guilty. Which was strange because it was not like she had to report to anyone. She was her own boss. She could do dumb things if she wanted to.

"There's no reason to. It was mutual and there's nothing to feel bad about." Kit knew women processed things differently from men. It both fascinated and frustrated him.

"Well, the thing is I don't know you." Stella wondered why everything was so simple for men. They wanted you, they had sex with you and they moved on to the next conquest. Men didn't question things. They went with the flow. And Stella didn't want to be just anyone's conquest.

"Well, you know me now, princess." And the more he saw of this complex woman, the more Kit knew that was not some one-off thing for him.

But what did Stella know? He was a thief who was an excellent lover. Not resume material, there.

"I don't normally act like this." Stella was seriously thinking of never having sex again. There must be a vow other than the nunnery one she could take. She would have to look that up on the internet. There was bound to be a site for that as there was for everything else. And sure, sex with Kit was good, damn good but where did that get her?

Kit smiled softly at her. He didn't need to be told that Stella Rowallan was a lady with class and principles. That was just obvious by her bearing.

"I know you don't. But you enjoyed the moment and I enjoyed it."

"That's not the point." Stella wasn't sure what the point was but there had to be one somewhere. Mutual enjoyment seemed a fairly reasonable excuse, but did she need or want an excuse?

"What is?" Kit really wanted to understand why Stella was beating herself up.

Stella didn't need rationality or understanding just now because she felt neither of those emotions. She needed what? Maybe something reliable like a carton of Sara Lee French Vanilla ice cream and a bottle of chocolate fudge sauce while she told her best friend the dumb thing she just did. Another woman would understand. But then her best friend was Simone who also had been screwed by Kit and she had the morals of an alley cat so her objectivity would therefore be screwed too. So maybe she would just stick to the ice cream and fudge sauce and maybe get some rainbow sprinkles in lieu of a best friend. You always knew where you stood with rainbow sprinkles.

"Let's just get your damn idols." Stella pushed her way out of the photo booth not caring if one of the weird assed witch people was hanging around. She was suddenly in the mood to take one of those freaks on.

Kit sighed and stood up. Something had happened between the fabulous sex and now. But what? *Women, go figure.* He went outside the booth and looked around him. He could see no one overly suspicious considering it was a train station at night. Kit reached into the outside photo bin and pulled out the rapidly processed photos. He smiled as he looked at them. Stella Rowallan was stunning. Pure passion and raw emotion as she took what was offered and gave so much more back.

"Where are you going, princess?" Kit watched Stella storming off in the opposite direction from where they needed to go.

"To the lockers." Duh. Wasn't that why they were there? Though really, what was she doing with this man anymore? Other than she wanted to see what this idol thing looked like she was good to go home and eat her ice cream.

"The lockers are this way." Kit pointed to lockers in the distance in the opposite direction to her.

"I knew that..." Stella muttered to herself as she turned around and stomped off in search of the lockers. Two teenagers whistled at Stella's bare legs and started to approach her. "Back off or die." She hissed evilly at them. They backed off quickly. Freaking men and sex. She turned and looked at Kit Kincaid. Was he laughing? Stella narrowed her eyes at him. It was partly his damn fault she was half naked.

Kit swallowed any residual laughter, knowing the lady was in a bad mood and that he didn't want to be parting ways with her so soon. The word "keeper" kept coming into his mind when he thought about Stella Rowallan.

"Which one?" Stella stopped at the generic, grey lockers. They all looked the same to her. It was weird to think one of them held a sought after ancient artifact.

"E2," Kit replied as he walked over to it. He pulled off his shoes and pulled back the lining to retrieve the key.

"Oh, you're kidding me? In your shoe? That's the first place the bad guys look." Would James Bond be that obvious? Though the new Bond was blond, so maybe it was a blond thing. But then thieves probably worked differently from spies. Coming after sex in a photo booth it was all too confusing to work out.

"What do you know about bad guys, princess?"

"I know you." Kit was bad in sinfully rich and exciting way.

"But I'm a good guy." Sure, he stole stuff, but he never went out of his way to harm anyone.

Stella snorted in derision.

Kit looked at her thoughtfully. What was going on in her mind? He had known her for barely moments but he was fascinated.

"Do you always get this stropky after making love?"

"We did not make love. We had sex!" Stella yelled at him, not caring who else heard. She wasn't planning on seeing any of these night time travelers again so what did she care?

Kit got it. He understood why Stella's mood had changed so quickly. His words about making love had thrown her completely off balance. But it had been more than just sex to Kit. He found it interesting that one simple word had made her so angry. He had a feeling Stella Rowallan was fighting a whole lot of feelings inside her. However he knew by the look in her eyes, now was not the time to get into a deep and meaningful discussion with a pissed off woman.

"And I'm not stropky." Well, if she was, she had every right to be. It had been a trying couple of hours for her, what with sex and explosions and being butt naked.

"Sure you're not." Kit knew an excellent remedy for frustration and anger and that was to have more sex. And he planned on doing so with Ms Rowallan very soon. But that would be when she was calmer. There was no point trying to hold on to a wildcat who did not want to be held.

"And we only had sex twice so you can hardly say ask if I 'always' get stroppy." Damn man was not going to tell her how she felt.

"What about when I had my fingers inside you at the wedding table? What was that?" Kit found it cute that a woman of the times could still blush as Stella did.

"That was..." What was that? Most likely it was a prelude to losing control and doing what she craved. Preludes sucked. "That was you being manipulative."

"You could have stopped me and screamed at my offensive behavior yet you met me outside and had sex with me," Kit pointed out.

"Whatever." Stella knew it was an inadequate response to essentially what was an honest assessment of the situation but there were times for honesty and this wasn't one of them.

Seeing Stella didn't want to pursue that line of thought any longer, Kit slid the key into the lock, turning it as he went. As much as he would like to focus on Stella Rowallan, the idol was why there were there.

Stella moved over to look inside the locker. There was only a khaki green duffle bag within. How disappointing.

"Have you got the right locker?"

"What did you expecting? The Arc of the Covenant with lightning bolts shooting out?" Kit pulled the bag out and shut the locker.

"Smart ass..." Stella muttered. Maybe she had expected more. It wasn't everyday you got caught up with a thief and an ancient idol.

"Come along." Kit grabbed Stella's elbow and started walking. They had what they came for and he was a great believer in getting out while the going was good.

Stella trotted along beside him.

"I want to see the idol."

"Not now."

"What? I come all this way with you and I don't get to look at it?" That hardly seemed fair to Stella. There had to be some reward to all this. She was still in two minds as to whether great sex was a reward.

"You can look at it the car."

"But I want to go home." Stella had visions of having a sneak peek at the idol and borrowing train fare from the thief before she shook his hand in farewell.

"I'll be taking you home."

Stella tossed up her options. Get a train and never see the idol and Kit again? Or take him to her home and look at the idol? But then what did she do with him at her

home? Was it likely he would leave her in the driveway and drive off? Decisions, decisions. None of them had to involve sex, so essentially a decision should be easy enough to make. Eany meaney miney mo...

"Fine you can take me home but you're not staying." Yep, Stella was pleased that she sounded like she was back in control. Now she just had to act it.

Once in the car, Stella insisted on looking at the idol straight away. Curiosity may have killed the cat but a curious Stella was no pussy cat when impatient.

Kit would have liked to have waited until they got to somewhere safer but he could see the woman needed to be appeased. He pulled the carefully wrapped idol out of the bag and handed it Stella.

"How do you know which one is the real one?" It was not like you could make a big red cross on it, was it? That surely had to affect resale value.

"I just know." Kit had wrapped the real one securely to allow no chance of mishap.

Stella gently pulled back the soft covering and looked at the face of the idol. She was incredibly aware that she held several thousand years of history in her hand. It was about the size of her hand, made of stone and smooth and worn to the touch. It seemed such a simple thing for people to be fighting over to win for their own. The face of the feminine idol stared back at her stoically. Skilful hands had carved a face of great reverence. The eyes were almond shaped, the nose aristocratic and the hair bound and wavy. Was it a goddess? Stella wondered as she took in the exaggerated curves of the figure. It definitely indicated fertility. The carved breasts were large and idol's hips indicated great ability for child bearing. Who was this woman and how did she come to attain the power to make modern man fight over her to acquire her? She knew instinctively it was wrong for any one person to own it.

"You have to return this, Kit. This is history and it's important." She could feel that just by holding it in her hand. It was almost like a warmth was radiating from the idol making her skin tingle. Possibly a foolish feeling, but then again there were a lot of unexplainable things that happened in life. All Stella knew was that it an ancient treasure that belonged to everyone.

Kit smiled softly. Stella had called him by his first name without thinking. It sounded good on her lips. And he was not surprised she wanted to return it. The light in her eyes told him she understood the importance of this idol to the country it belonged to. He felt a pang of guilt at his actions.

"I will return it." The words were out of his mouth before he had time to think of all the reasons why they should have remained inside.

"You promise?" Suddenly it seemed really important to get Kit's word on this, almost as if the carved woman was urging her on.

"I'd promise you anything, princess." And that was no lie. Kit Kincaid knew in that one moment this woman had been destined to become the most important woman in his life. It was weird how epiphanies came out of the blue and hit you between the eyes when you least expected it.

Would Kit promise her anything? Most likely. Could she trust him? Believe him? Did she want promises fulfilled by him or did she just need that ice cream and a good night's sleep?

"Just return it, that's all I ask." Because that was all Stella knew she could get for the moment.

Chapter Five

"Well this is nice and messy," Kit commented as Stella opened the door to her home. He had deliberately followed her up the steps not giving her any chance to escape him. Kit knew if Stella closed the door on him and his presence she would be reluctant to open it up again. He looked around at the disorder. Books were stacked in haphazard piles, clothes were slung carelessly over chairs and dust catchers and assorted clutter littered what seemed like every available surface.

"You're a thief. You can hardly make judgments on others."

Who invited him in here anyway? Kit was just supposed to drop her off, and not come to the door and then follow her inside making comments about her stuff. She knew she wasn't a neat person by nature. Stella did not have to be. She lived alone and she liked it that way. She didn't have to justify herself to anyone, especially not a thief. But Kit had followed her into her home without so much as a by-your-leave. Stella had a feeling Kit had the ability to go anywhere he wanted just by the sheer force of his personality. And, at this moment, she was too tired to fight him. Luckily for her, despite leaving her purse and keys at the reception, she had the foresight a long time ago to hide a spare house key out among the potted plants in her front garden. However she suspected Kit probably had a knack of entering places with the minimum of effort. She herself was evidence of that.

Stella turned to look at him. She never realized how tall he was. He had a masculinity that could overwhelm a woman. It wasn't threatening, it was just there, unavoidable and making you think about stuff you didn't want to. He had momentarily overwhelmed her but she was back on track and not going down the "having sex with Kit Kincaid" path again. Well, that was the plan. And maybe her original plan A had not worked out so well and it had indeed led to plan B but now she was onto plan C—accept what happened and move on.

"So is there some hidey hole or den of thieves you hide out at?"

And can you please go to it now, Stella nearly added.

Kit had a very nice and expensive apartment in the heart of Brisbane city, however, if Stella wanted to think it was something more glamorous or fictional than that so be it. He wanted to encourage any interest she showed in him at all. Kit didn't want her hardening her heart to him as the possibilities for the future for them were endless as far as he was concerned.

"I thought I'd stick around here and keep you company." He saw Stella stiffen at this. He knew she wasn't as indifferent to him as she was trying to make out.

"Why?" And what exactly was his idea of "keeping company", as if she did not already know? And while having sex again with him was not an unwelcome idea, it

was also not a smart one. Her thoughts and emotions were screwed up enough at the moment.

"Because I'm a friendly guy." He smiled down at her.

"I have enough friends." Though none had that killer smile.

"What about lovers?" Kit could only think of one lover in particular for Stella Rowallan—himself.

There was no way was Stella was going to allow herself to get all hot and flustered by Kit and he could take that sultry come and get me look and shove it.

"Okay, what is it?" She put her hands on her hips and went on the defensive.

If Stella was trying to turn him off her, she was failing. Her jacket was riding up once again and Kit tried hard not to look down.

"Can't a man hang out with a woman who intrigues him?"

"Do most women fall for this line, O King of Crap?"

Kit threw back his head and laughed.

"I really like you."

And Stella could say the same thing back, but where would that get her?

"I'm taking a punt here but I reckon you don't want to venture to your bat cave because you're worried about Camille and her merry band of weirdos attacking you and nicking the idol back. Is this correct?" It had to do with her "intriguing" him, which was disappointing but she could deal with that.

"Yes there is that possibility but there is another reason." Kit moved in close to Stella.

"And that is?" This habit of his of being up close and personal made her heart beat awfully erratically. The man should have a warning label attached to him.

"I want to make love to you again." Kit put his finger to her lips to stop the words he knew she was going to say. "And you know it's not just sex between us."

Stella pushed his finger away. She had never felt this alive at anyone's touch before. A simple finger on her lips could undo her.

"And how do I know that?" She knew the answer but when unsure of herself playing dumb and being stubborn was her forte.

"Because you feel the same thing I do."

"What? Tired and wanting to have a shower?"

Kit pulled the photos that had been taken earlier out of his pocket and handed them to Stella.

"Look at us together. Look at you...the passion in your eyes as you give yourself up to the moment. Have you honestly ever felt that way with anyone else?" Kit knew the answer was no, he just wanted to hear it from Stella.

No, she hadn't. She looked down at the photos. They were back and white and her hands shook as she took in the images. Bloody hell. Was that her with her back arched

and breasts flung forward as she rode Kit to fiery completion. She looked wild and out of control and like she never wanted to stop. The photos were so hot. She had never seen anything like them. Kit's mouth on her breast and her hands cradling his head as she held him to her, made her feel a familiar tingling and tightening between her legs. Stella wanted to do all that again with Kit but slower and longer, then faster and harder. But where would that get her? She wasn't into one night stands and Kit Kincaid looked like a definite one nighter to her.

"The bottom line, Stella Rowallan, is that you are a smart, sexy and beautiful woman who I want to spend time with. I like the way you think and talk and I like the way your body fits mine so perfectly. Is it a bad thing having great sex with someone you're so in tune with?"

Wow. The sincerity in his voice really got to her. How did she answer that with anything other than "No"? Anything else would be a lie.

"Um, I'm...going to have a shower." Stella desperately needed time to think and she did her best thinking in the shower. "You can leave or stay or whatever..." Stella shook her head in wonder and confusion. "I don't really know what to do with you."

Kit could see the vulnerability in her eyes and the truthfulness of her admission. He felt strange warmth in his chest and felt happier than he had in a long time.

"I know princess."

How could he know her? He had only just met her yet somehow there was something there but what? She turned and went up the hall to her bathroom. If Kit was still there when she came out she would think about what to do with him then.

* * * * *

The warm water running over her breasts felt wonderful. Stella flung her head back and gave in to the sensation.

Kit had never seen a lovelier sight in his life than Stella Rowallan naked and glistening wet with her full breasts arched forward into the shower's spray. He could have watched her for hours. But he had other more intimate plans. Kit quickly removed his clothes, dropping them to the floor as he slid the clear shower door open. He looked down at her rounded womanly ass and hips that faced him and longed to be joined with her again. He moved in close and prodded his already erect cock into the cleft of her butt. He knew she expected him to help make a decision for her.

Stella was not surprised Kit had joined her in the shower. Part of her had wanted him to and had hoped he would. She knew why he was there. He craved the same thing she did. To join with someone who fitted them completely. But another part of her, the one that still claimed to be rational, hoped Kit wouldn't come into the bathroom, because the more time she spent with him, the more she wanted him and that would make it so much harder when he left her. She did not want to be some pathetic woman listening to lonesome country songs while crying over a man who could never be hers. She wanted Kit and knew she could not have him forever so what did she do? Live for

the moment or later regret a moment had passed? Who knew what the answer was? All she knew was his hands were slippery and smooth as they slowly massaged their way up her body.

"What are you doing in here?" It was a dumb question but it was one she found honor bound as a woman to ask.

"As you know, there is a drought on and we have been told to conserve water any way we can." Kit turned Stella around to face him. "I just want to touch you, princess."

The raw honesty in his eyes made Stella gulp. There was so much she wanted and needed but she was afraid to take or ask for.

"Kit I..."

"Don't speak, just feel." Kit turned off the water and reached for the soap. He lathered it up between his hands. The scent of vanilla and coconut assailed his senses. There was not one inch of Stella's body he was not going to touch. He moved forward and started at her shoulders gently massaging the tension he could feel pinching at them.

Stella sighed softly and closed her eyes. Kit's cock pulsed hotly against her stomach as he massaged her shoulders. She had never felt anything so wonderful as this man's touch. She came alive under it. She moved his hands down to her breasts. She loved the way it felt when he touched the swollen mounds.

Kit was more than happy to follow the lady's demands and pay very special attention to her beautiful breasts. He soaped them slowly, leaning forward to place soft, sucking kisses onto Stella's mouth.

Stella was ready to fall to the ground and let Kit do whatever he wanted to her. However, Kit kept her standing as his hands moved slowly down her body paying the same attention to her stomach and hips.

Kit deliberately missed the wet tangled curls of her pussy. He planned to come back and give that area long and special attention. He knelt down and continued to massage her legs and feet. His ran his hands up to her butt kneading her plump flesh, sliding sensually into the cleft of her ass making Stella writhe sinuously.

Stella leaned forward and grasped Kit's broad shoulders to stop herself from falling. This was the most wondrous thing any man had ever done for her. Who knew she could feel this good?

Kit looked up at Stella. Her eyes were closed and her head was thrown back. That she was enjoying and feeling so much intense pleasure made him feel powerful.

"Open your eyes, princess. I want you to see what I'm doing to you." As her eyes fluttered open at his words, Kit lathered up the soap up again and gently pushed her legs apart. He slid his soapy hand between her legs and into the folds within, slowly massaging and teasing the soft flesh.

"Oh God..." Stella moaned as she clutched at Kit, as his slippery fingers circled her clit with a slow, strong friction that made her made to want cry in pleasure.

As Kit slid two slippery fingers inside her, he felt the instant response of her vaginal muscles wanting to tighten around him. He slid his fingers back and forth and smiled as he heard the woman above him whimper in pleasure.

"Please, Kit..."

"Please what, princess..." Kit continued his slow thrusting in and out of her tight passage. He wanted to replace his fingers with his cock but the lady had to ask for it.

Stella pulled at his shoulders. She wanted him now. Couldn't he see that? Why was he torturing her so?

"Now..." Stella could barely get the word out, she so close to losing control.

"What is it you want?" Kit asked, his fingers continuing their exquisite torture. He wanted Stella to admit there was so much more to what was going on between them than just sex. He could have taken her the minute he got in the shower if that was the case. But he wanted more. Kit wanted submission.

"I want you." Stella's eyes locked with his, begging for release.

"How badly do you want me?" Kit was on the verge of coming just by the look in her eyes. It was desperate and needy and he wanted to answer the call. He wouldn't be able to hold on much longer.

"Real bad, Kit. I want you real bad."

Kit removed his fingers and watched as Stella turned around and pushed out her ass out in invitation toward him.

"Please fuck me, Kit..."

He rose up and stood before her. Her pink, wet backside was all the enticement he needed.

"Is this really what you want?" Though Kit doubted he could stop at this moment anyway but he would honor her wishes. "Are you sure?"

Stella turned her head and locked eyes with Kit.

"Lover boy, if you do not get inside me right now, I am going to have to have to do a do-it-yourself job or explode." She was aching with need.

The thought of Stella's own fingers on her on clit rubbing herself to completion was something Kit wanted to see. However, there was no way she was getting there without him inside her.

"I can't have you doing that without me, princess." Kit grabbed her hips and pulled her to him, impaling her in one long stroke. He had never wanted take a woman more than Stella.

"Oh yes!" Stella cried out in pleasure as she felt his cock all the way inside her. His balls slapped against her ass as he thrust in and out of her slowly. "Harder," she ordered.

Kit chuckled hoarsely as his hands caressed her breasts.

"Yes ma'am." He withdrew his cock completely then thrust back into her, hard as requested. Kit heard Stella's excited shriek of approval. He moved his hips back and forth in a fast, rhythmic pace.

Stella's whimpers got louder and louder as the pleasure spiraled up inside her, all the way up her spine, down into her legs and curling her toes. She screamed as she came. She could not ever remember feeling this way with other man but Kit Kincaid. The others had just been amateurs.

Kit laughed loudly in triumph. He liked that way Stella made her pleasure known. As he came inside her, hot semen shooting upwards, he had one second of guilt for not wearing a condom but he could not have stopped this moment for anything.

"My God you're addictive." Stella leaned into the tiled wall as she tried to catch her breath. Any more of this man would make her a complete, physical wreck. But what a way to go. It was worth considering getting wrecked.

Kit pulled out of her and pulled her to him kissing her hard.

"I love you, Stella Rowallan," He had known it the moment she had looked so pissed when she sat beside him at the wedding table.

"What?" Stella pushed back on his chest. You can't love me." This was just too ridiculous and fast and a bunch of other things that were too scary to name.

"I can and I do." Kit had never been surer of anything.

"Well that's just insane." Stella had never had anyone tell her they loved her. Could she even say it back? She looked up at Kit. Did she love Kit Kincaid? No...maybe...no... Oh bloody hell. She should have stuck to the ice cream.

"No, none of this is insane. It's just that way it was always meant to be. Don't think, just enjoy it." Kit kissed Stella hard.

Chapter Six

"What did you mean you lost Kit Kincaid?" Camille Forveaux yelled angrily at the cringing men before her. "I told you to watch him." She had sent a band of her followers out to track him down. There were seven of them and one of him. How could they have lost one man so easily?

"My lady, we lost him at Roma Street train station."

The man blithered out an apology but Camille was not listening. What was Kit doing at a train station? Camille laughed suddenly in realization as it hit her. Typical Kit, hiding something in the most obvious place. She should have known better. After all, he had been in the same "acquisition and sales" business, as they liked to call it, as long as she had. They had been rivals for years.

Camille had first met Kit five years ago when they had attempted to steal the same diamond pentacle necklace. Camille liked to acquire anything occult, supernatural or said to possess black magic. Kit acquired and sold anything that anyone wanted and would pay him high enough to get. She had got the necklace that time, as she had originally got the idol this time.

But she had always been a fool when it came to the sweet-talking sexy Kincaid. He was her one weakness. She lusted after him. She chanted love spells to bring him to her and she believed one had actually worked when he had turned up on her doorstep a week ago. He had walked in grabbed her and kissed her so passionately her head had spun. She had been helpless with need as he had taken her hard and fast. Camille could still remember how he felt up inside her. But it had all been an illusion. A deliberate seduction to get the idol. The man was a player. She had momentarily forgotten that. Kit had the idol now, but she would get it back and she would make him pay.

Camille had given Kit twenty-four hours to willingly give her the idol. She had not promised she wouldn't try and take it from him before then. Her mind went to thoughts of the half naked woman who reportedly ran from the wedding with Kit. Who was she? She remembered the way Kit had looked at her. Was there something more there than just sexual need? And if there was, could that be exploited for her own gains? She was more than aware that Kit had no intention of meekly handing over the idol. She would need leverage.

"Find out who that woman was at the wedding and don't come back until you can tell me." She watched the men run off to do her bidding. It was nice to have such power over the nasty and biddable.

If Kit was to be found with this woman, then she was a weakness for him. Camille knew only too well Kit owed allegiance to no woman. They were just toys he enjoyed and gave pleasure to before leaving them wanting more.

"Oh Kit, you're going to pay."

* * * * *

"It's lust...that's all it is. You haven't had a man for so long you're getting all gooey at the first one that comes along and gives you an orgasm." Stella softly mumbled to herself as she logged on to her computer. She was still achingly aware of how Kit felt inside her. It was imprinted on her being. But was that love? She snorted at the possibility, scared that it just might be true. She didn't know what to do about love. She had no experience in that. "I doubt it."

"You doubt what?" Kit felt wonderful and refreshed, as if he could take on the world. He had heard about the power of people being in love. However he thought it was a load of crap to sell romance novels. But now he knew the truth. "What's on your mind?" As if he didn't know. The whole declaration of love had thrown Stella Rowallan completely. Not unusual when they had known each other for such short a time. However, it felt right to Kit, and he relied on his instincts. Besides, Kit believed time was irrelevant.

The man was a thief, naturally he would walk softy and turn up when you were talking to yourself.

"Nothing. I logged on and you should be able to check your email account."

"You look pretty sexy with those glasses on, princess." The rims were silver and slightly old fashioned, but as sexy as hell on Stella. "They're turning me on."

"It seems everything turns you on," Stella scoffed at his words. She only wore the glasses for computer-based work.

"About you, yes definitely." The woman could wear a burlap sack, be bald and barefooted and Kit would still want her. Just the simple black cotton shorts and red t-shirt she wore looked sexy.

Stella pushed the glasses back onto her nose nervously. She had sort of half made up her mind not to have sex with Kit again. It was too overwhelming especially when he insisted he loved her. That was something she scared the hell out of her. Love was a huge thing and she wasn't sure she wanted to go there.

"I need to wear them for the computer." Stella jumped up from the desk and moved away to allow Kit to sit down in her place.

"Are you okay?"

"Sure, why wouldn't I be?" She had just had the best sex of her life with a hot thief who just declared he loved her. Normal everyday stuff – not.

"You seem kind of nervous." Kit sat down at the desk and started logging in to his email account.

"So, are you checking your email to keep tabs on friends?" Stella felt a change of topic was most definitely needed.

Kit looked at her and grinned. Her words were refreshingly innocent. He liked that about Stella. As hard and as tough as she tried she always came across as soft and sweet.

"Your change of subject has been duly noted, princess. I'm checking on my clients."

"You said you were going to return the idol." Surely Kit was not going to break his promise so soon? Could a self-acknowledged thief even keep a promise? If he broke that promise, did that mean that other things like loving her were just words and not true?

"And I will, but I have other acquisitions to find for people and sell for ridiculously high prices." Supply and demand was a wonderful thing as far as Kit was concerned.

"Shouldn't we go to the museum and slip the idol back now?" Stella checked herself. Had she just said "we" instead of "you"? What was she thinking? She had no idea how to be a thief or what the person was called who returned stuff that belonged to someone else.

"You mean under cover of darkness in the dead of night?" Kit was pleased that she had included herself in his plans. It may have been unconsciously but it was still an inclusion. And that meant something.

"Well, you're the thief. I thought lurking around in the dark would be your MO." It was two o'clock in the morning. It seemed the perfect time to do whatever he was going to do.

"The best time to take the idol back is early morning when the guard has just got in." Kit had no hesitation in explaining his business to Stella. He trusted her. He could tell by the look in her eyes she didn't rat on anyone. "Then the guard will be half awake and probably be getting over a fight he just had with his significant other, so he won't be with it enough to know what's going on."

"Right...good to know if I ever want to become a thief or what is you call yourself."

"An Acquisition Merchant."

"Do you have gold embossed business cards printed with the title?" Stella could imagine Kit handing them out to those he thought suitable of his time and attentions.

Kit found it interesting that Stella was taking the whole "acquiring" business in her stride.

"The people who need to know how to find me do so without me advertising." His was an exclusive clientele. Their privacy was carefully maintained. Everyone Kit dealt with was vetted carefully. He wanted no slip-ups.

Stella didn't have to be a genius to know that Kit was very good at what he did. He was so cool and calm discussing it all as if it was the local fruit and veg shop he was running.

"So how long have you been doing this?" Stella watched as he quickly scanned what appeared to be dozens of emails on the screen. She knew looking over someone's shoulder at personal information was not considered polite, but to hell with that. She

wanted to know more and Stella always believed there was a sliding scale to politeness. You could justify a lot of nosiness that way.

"At least fifteen years."

Wow. Stella was in and out of jobs at the drop of a hat. Fifteen years was a long time. It confirmed her suspicion that he was good at what he did.

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-seven." Kit would happily tell Stella anything to maintain her interest in him.

"So at twenty-two you decided to forget about university and become a thief...sorry, an Acquisition Merchant. Is there a degree course for that?"

"My father did it all his life. I learned from him and when he died I took over the family business." Kit still missed him.

"I'm sorry about your father." Stella had seen the sudden pain in his eyes. You never got over losing people in your life. Not that she had ever had anyone in her life to lose. Though the inevitability of losing Kit was not something Stella wanted to contemplate at that moment.

"Yeah, me too." He stopped his typing and looked at the woman who was so suddenly interested in sharing. "What's the Stella Rowallan story?" Kit wanted to know everything about the woman he had fallen for.

"Nothing much, I'm thirty-three, I work in a job I hate and I am paying off a mortgage. Standard, boring story everyone has."

Kit knew there had to be more. Everyone had a story.

"Family? Friends? Pets?"

"No pets and you 'know' my best friend Simone of course." It was hard to believe such a lot had happened in one day. She had walked in on Kit and Simone and now he was at her home. "As for family, I am sure biologically they exist somewhere." She saw Kit's puzzled look. "I grew up in foster care. My biological mother was apparently a teenager who left me to the authorities because she couldn't cope." Stella saw the sudden sadness and light of understanding in Kit's eyes. "It was the smart thing for a teenage kid to do and it probably worked out better that way."

That explained a lot to Kit. Stella Rowallan had probably never been loved. No wonder she couldn't believe his sudden declaration of love for her. He would make it his duty to give her the love she had missed in her life.

"That's sad, princess."

"No, it's just life, and life happens all the time." It was definitely time for another change of subject. "Any emails from customers?"

Kit knew that door on that subject had been closed and wouldn't be opened in a hurry by Stella.

"Nothing interesting except several warnings about Camille."

"I forgot about her." Being with Kit scrambled her normally adequate brain functions.

Kit grinned at her.

"Great sex will do that to you. You forget everything else around you."

"Did you?" Or was she the only dope here?

"The sex was fantastic but no, I need to be aware at all times." It was what kept him alive and relatively trouble free. "It takes a lot to make me completely oblivious to my surroundings."

Stella arched her eyebrows at this statement.

"Really? That sounds like a challenge." She enjoyed a challenge when one was offered especially in such a confident "won't happen to me" way.

"No challenge, it's just the way it is."

"So, I could do anything to you now and you could still concentrate on your emails?"

"Yeah, anything at all."

"Interesting..." Time to test this thief of hers.

Kit watched as Stella slowly dropped to her knees.

"What are you doing?"

"I just want to see if what you claim is correct, lover boy. So don't mind me. Just keep on working...if you can." Stella crawled under the desk and grabbed his fly, zipping downwards.

Kit smiled at her actions. That she was initiating sex intrigued him.

"I am more than happy to oblige you in a moment princess." Kit felt her pull his cock out of the opening. At the touch of her hand it stiffened further with interest. He rolled the chair back and looked down at her. Would she? He knew he wouldn't be able to concentrate if she did that. That was beyond any power in the galaxy.

Stella leaned forward and licked the tip of his cock. She heard a loud groan emanate from Kit. Excellent. She slowly flicked her tongue over the smooth, hard surface. She had never seen the point of doing this to any man before as no man seemed worth her time or effort. But Kit was different. She sucked down hard on the swollen tip.

"Holy bloody hell!" Kit still couldn't believe this was Stella Rowallan on her knees with his cock in her mouth sucking him as if he was a lollipop. He grasped the chair arms and gave into pleasure...stuff the emails. The fact she still had on her glasses on turned him on even more.

Stella let the tip of his cock pop out from her lips. It was shiny and hard. She looked at Kit. His eyes were focused intently on her. Stella decided to push him a little bit further. She opened her mouth and took him all the way into her throat, sucking hard and gently massaging his balls in her hands as she did.

"Oh princess." The sucking was going to undo him completely. So much for his self control. He had none whatsoever when it came to this woman. "I am going to come in your mouth."

Stella sucked harder in response. She was aware and she didn't mind one bit. It made her feel hot and powerful. As he ejaculated into her mouth, she swallowed the strangely salty, musky fluid down.

Kit tried hard not to yell his head off as Stella sucked him dry.

Stella stood up and licked her lips and looked at Kit. He was flushed and wild eyed. The emails were forgotten and his attention was solely on her.

"I've never done that before. But that was interesting and I think you learnt a lesson, lover boy." Added that that Stella hadn't gone against her plan not to have sex with him because technically she hadn't. Best of all, she had proved a point to the Acquisition Merchant. Stella turned to walk away to leave him to his emails.

Kit launched forward and made a vain grab for Stella. As far as he was concerned, this moment wasn't over until his lady came as she had made him come.

Stella dodged Kit's move and dashed up the hall. It was only a half-hearted attempt to escape him. She wanted Kit to capture her and make her submit to him. So much for her good intentions of not having sex with the thief again. The man was in her blood and her blood ran hot at the thought of what he could do to her.

Kit followed eagerly, shucking his trousers and shirt as he went. That Stella admitted she had never sucked any other man to completion before made Kit's heart swell with love and pride and good old fashioned lust. He wanted her, and he knew the feeling was definitely mutual.

"Oh princess, you're not escaping from me now, not after that. " Kit easily caught her and tackled her to the carpeted floor. He pinned her down with a knee on either side of her hips and rubbed his groin against her slowly.

Stella was a little surprised Kit wanted her so soon after spending himself so completely in her mouth. The few other men she had been with before had never been able to rise to the occasion again so quickly. But the growing evidence of his cock proved he was no spent force. But then, he was like no other man.

"I'm tired, Kit." That was a lie. Stella wanted to see what he planned to do to her.

"That's okay, I'll do all the work." Kit whipped her shorts and panties off together.

The man obviously had practice is getting a woman naked.

"Kit..." Stella felt her legs being lifted up and parted as Kit sat back on his heels and pulled her forward. She knew what he planned to do. "No one's ever..."

"I know, so enjoy it, princess." Kit tongue dipped into the deep folds between Stella's legs. He felt her tense up in reaction. "Relax..."

"How can I when you're licking me...oh...like that?" Kit's tongue found and slowly lapped at the small hidden bud between her legs. Stella screamed loudly as his lips descended and sucked hard on the nub of flesh. "Are you trying to kill me?" she

moaned as his tongue continued flicking back and forth across the tortured flesh. She wanted to come badly.

Kit grinned as his mouth left her pussy and he stared at the woman thrashing before him. She still had her glasses and shirt on. It was wildly erotic to him that only her lower body was completely uncovered and under his control.

"Do you want to come, princess?" Kit asked just before he slid his tongue into her vagina.

Stella had never imagined anyone would ever do this to her before. It was a completely different sensation from having a hard penis inside. It was more ticklish and teasing. It would never compete with a penis but it was an exciting alternative.

"God yes, let me come." Stella would do anything to have Kit fully inside her. She pulled his head from between her legs. "Please Kit," she begged.

Kit pulled her into his arms.

"Well, climb on board."

Stella needed no further invitation as she straddled his hips. She pulled her shirt off over her head and flung her bra to the floor. She grabbed Kit's hands and put them on her breasts where they belonged.

Kit's mouth instinctively descended onto one of her taut nipples and he sucked hard. He knew how much Stella liked having her breasts sucked and he was more than happy to oblige.

Stella grabbed Kit's cock and positioned it at the entrance to her vagina. She was hot and wet and ready to take him to the hilt.

"We have to stop doing this..." Stella moaned as she slid down over his erect cock covering him completely. The heat and feel of him inside her felt so good and so damned right. No other man had ever made her feel so completely filled.

"Why? Are you afraid you'll never want to let me go?" Kit growled as Stella moved up and down on him.

That was exactly the reason. He was addictive. He was the sort of man she could have beside her every day and never get enough of. But Stella knew that wasn't an option. She had to keep telling herself this was just one night in her life. A fabulous, wild night of passion, but only that. To expect anything more would be foolish. This was live-for-the-moment stuff. This wasn't long term commitment stuff. She knew that. The fact that Kit said he loved her was nice, but it was not believable. No one could fall in love that quickly. They knew nothing about each other but the way their bodies reacted.

Kit was not surprised Stella didn't answer him. It wasn't just that she was caught up in the moment, panting as she ground up and down on his cock, pushing them both to orgasm. She was scared. He knew that. And he would work at changing that. There was no way Stella Rowallan was walking out of his life.

Chapter Seven

"Why am I sick?" Stella answered back into the phone. Honest to God her manager was anal. It was seven twenty in the morning. The fact that she was doing the right thing calling in, allowing plenty of time for her manager to run around like a wet hen looking for a replacement for her, should be enough. Why did he have to demand an explanation? Sick was sick, it needed no further discussion. How hard could it be for someone else to do her job? It was not like you had to be a genius to file, photocopy and maintain spreadsheets all day. "I prefer not to discuss it over the phone." Wanker. As he continued dribbling on with the whiny questions, Stella decided she had listened to him long enough. "Fine. I had wild passionate sex with a thief and it was so damn good that I can barely walk. Is that a good enough reason? If I'm not having earth shattering sex with the thief again tomorrow then I'll be in." She hung the phone up. Stella looked up to see Kit's amused gaze her. "I hate that frigging job and now I have a reason to leave."

"Before you get fired." Kit had never heard any one use sex as an excuse. It was certainly different. But then, so was Stella Rowallan.

"Something like that." Stella knew there was every likelihood that she was going get the sack, but she would cross that bridge and blow it up behind her if and when that happened.

"So how are your legs?" Kit looked down at the bruises he was pretty sure he had unintentionally given her. He felt bad about that. He touched her thigh softly. "Do they hurt?"

She had to admit it was awfully sweet that Kit had asked and that he sounded was so concerned.

"They're fine." Stella did not add that the man had marked her for life, as that was too much information for him to have. "I bruise easily. I'll get over it."

They both knew she wasn't just talking about marks on the surface of her skin.

"We have to return the idol." Stella had to get back on track. The plan, in order of importance, was to get Kit to take the idol back to the museum. Then tomorrow she would look for a new job and get over sex with thief. All pretty obvious stuff. That was all she needed to concentrate on. Not the man with the soft, tender look in his eyes. *Look away, look away.*

"What's wrong?" Kit didn't expect an answer to that question as he suspected Stella didn't give them easily. He could wait.

"Nothing." Everything, she added to herself.

"Did you get any sleep?"

After driving Kit and herself into a frenzy earlier, Stella had staggered off to bed to leave him to his emails. She was so tired she had collapsed onto her bed without changing. When she woke up three hours later she woke up gasping for air. She had had the worst dream. It was soul shaking and ghastly and not something she ever imagined she would dream about anyone, let alone Kit Kincaid. From what little she had seen of the marriages around her, she could understand why the divorce rate was high. Her friends seemed trapped and totally incompatible and she never wanted to be in that position. She woke up sweating and clutching her pillow. In her dream she had married Kit. It had been this nice, sweet, romantic ceremony with Stella all dressed in white and Kit looking all proud and happy. Stella shivered as she thought about it. She was not one of those girly girls who dreamed stuff like this. The obvious explanation had to be that she had just come from Simone's wedding, hence the reason she had been dreaming about marrying Kit. She could also throw in some Freudian thing to do with penises and that would explain the reason for this dream about marrying the thief.

"I slept fine." Stella stated simply. There was no need for Kit to know about one dumb dream. Time to move on. Back to whatever plan she was onto now. What was it Plan E or F? Whatever. "What does one wear on this type of mission to the museum? Black?" Until this moment, she had all but forgotten the reason Kit was there. But she had been through a lot and it was understandable how she lost the plot for a moment.

"Yeah with a ski mask and a striped pullover." Kit looked at her Stella, her eyes open wide at her words. "I'm kidding Stella. We just dress casually."

Casual? That seemed to be a letdown for Stella.

"In the movies..."

"Since when is real life a movie, princess?"

"Since you landed into mine." Her life was bill-paying boring until he rocked her tidy little world.

Kit smiled at her confession and leaned into her.

"Shook it up pretty badly huh?"

"Real bad." Stella looked at the delicious lips so close to hers. Do not be kissing the thief, Stella warned herself mentally. Kissing led to doing other things with him and while they were good what future did she have with this thief of hers? Not that he was hers except for this moment. "So casual clothes?"

"Yeah we want to fit in."

Stella couldn't imagine Kit not standing out in a crowd. He was just someone you would naturally look at. Or was that only if you were female and hormonally charged?

"Are you going home to the bat cave to change clothes?" Kit was still in the same black trousers and white shirt he had worn at the wedding.

"Have you got any men's clothes here?"

"No." Did he think she was a cross dresser?

"Good to know." Kit grinned as Stella blushed at his words. How was that possible after some of the things she had done to him and together? But it was also sweet and loveable. "We'll swing by the Chermside shopping centre on the way and buy some clothes for me."

Chermside was a huge shopping centre that was normally frantically busy. If they got there early enough then they could get in and out without getting caught up in the madness. One madness at time was enough for Stella.

"Okay so we go to the museum and do what?"

"I return the real one and leave their fake so they know they have the real one back."

"And you can sell the two fakes you have."

"Exactly."

Stella wasn't surprised at his confirmation. The man ran a business. He had money to make.

"Don't you feel bad about flogging fakes?" She did not want to take the moral high ground but she still had to ask.

"No, because people always want stuff they can't have. They don't need to know they're fakes. If they get what they think they need to make them happy then that's good. I, in turn, am happy to make a profit and the world still continues to turn without anyone getting hurt."

"And you live to 'acquire 'stuff another day." Stella did not add, "followed with walking out of my life and me putting on ten pounds trying to forget you". She didn't want to sound pathetic. She was borderline desperate and possibly needy but not pathetic. There was a slim degree of difference. Besides, she was sure it was the sex that made her needy. She would get over that in time. Three years from now she wouldn't remember Kit. Okay maybe five and a half years from now...

"What?" Kit knew there was so much going on that Stella chose not to say.

"Nothing." Stella tried to look blank and in control.

"Uh-huh." Kit didn't believe that for a second. "You can talk to me about stuff you're feeling."

Great sex and a man who wanted to listen to her? The dream of every woman. Naturally the gods sent her the one man she was fairly sure could not have. Maybe she should have gone to church and prayed more often. All her good intentions always came too late.

"I'm not feeling anything." Stella was trying to pretend she was at work and in her usual numbed state of automated office worker.

"Right." Kit was a liar, and he knew another liar when he heard one. Stella Rowallan was fibbing big time.

Stella knew it was time to gird her loins and get back on track.

"Where are the idols?" She remembered seeing the duffel bag in the car last night but not after that.

Kit produced the bag. He had left it on her sofa. It seemed weird to have something so precious in her home dumped on her sofa among the general chaos of her existence. Stella opened the bag and pulled them out. She looked critically at the idol and the fakes. They all looked the same to her. Three carved women with big hips and boobs.

"How do you know which is which they look alike to me."

"Like people, there is always a subtle different between what is real and false. This one is almost too perfect." Kit held one in his hands and watched as Stella compared it to the original.

"Who makes the fakes?" She could see what Kit meant. The original had a simple beauty of its own. The perfect fake was just that – too perfect.

"I have a team of people who do it."

"Go team."

"But like everything, princess, you can always tell if something is real and true, be it fake idol or hidden feelings. The truth always comes out." Kit looked at Stella significantly. He had fallen in love with her. It was just the way it was. And he was pretty sure, after all that had happened, that the feeling was mutual, but that Stella was not admitting it yet.

Okay then, this was getting a little too close to the bone, thought Stella.

"So I'm thinking jeans and a shirt would be good for the museum." She still wasn't sure why was she going with Kit. There was an answer but it was complicated and she wasn't in the best frame of mind to handle complicated. Better just to go with the flow and see what happened.

* * * * *

"My lady, we found the woman." The man reported on his mobile phone to his leader. They had gone back to the wedding after questioning a drunken guest as to the identity of the woman. "Her name is Stella Rowallan and she lives in Wilston."

Camille smiled as she listened to this information. She was pleased that she had a name to go with the face and body.

"Is Kit Kincaid with her?" That would be the telling thing as, to her knowledge of the man, Kit never stayed overnight with any sexual conquest.

"Kincaid is with her," the man confirmed. "We'll get the idol back now."

"No wait. I want to see what Kit has planned." Who was he selling the idol to? And for how much? Although she wanted to hold onto the idol for personal reasons, she would settle for a huge sum of money and the knowledge that she had thwarted him.

"He's leaving the house with the woman."

"Follow him, and don't attack until I say."

"Yes my lady."

Oh yeah, the woman was important to Kit. That was extremely useful information to Camille. Kit Kincaid had never had a weakness before.

Chapter Eight

"What do I do?" Stella asked as she stood in the foyer of the Queensland Museum at Southbank on the Brisbane River. It was cool and stately and housed artworks from landscapes to sculpture to dinosaurs and traveling exhibitions like the Beldarq one that was missing the true idol.

It was quiet. Not many people were around. But that wasn't surprising as it was early Sunday morning. Most people were smart enough to sleep in. Of course they did not need to sneak idols back into display cases.

Kit surveyed his surroundings. Posters were up announcing the Beldarq exhibit but no one seemed to be drifting over to the rooms that housed it so that was a bonus for them.

"Just act naturally." Kit held Stella's hand in his and the duffel bag in the other.

Stella could not remember the last time she had ever had the opportunity to hold someone's hand. It was sweet and natural and holding hands with this thief made her feel strangely safe.

Kit spied one guard only as they made their way into the Beldarq exhibit. He looked over at the glass case which contained the replacement idol. He could see why it had been easy for Camille to break in and snatch the idol. The security upgrade of the building had not extended to this particular room. Kit estimated it would take him only a minute or so to break the combination on the laser lock.

"The guard looks half asleep." In fact he looked like he wanted to be anywhere else but on the job. "You were right,"

Kit grinned down at her in a know-it-all way.

"I'm right about a lot of things, princess."

"And you're a smart ass, lover boy."

"So are you but that's why we're so good together."

"Whatever." What Kit was true but love was not necessarily a permanent thing Stella could count on. She knew that the only person she could count on was herself. She looked around the exhibit. Only one bored guard and them. Beldarq clearly wasn't big on the museum tour. But then who the hell had heard of some small town thousands of miles across the ocean from them? Stella only knew it existed because a thief had told her about it. How weird was that? "Why is there only one guard? Is that normal?"

"It's probably because they know the real idol is not in its case so they're not worried about people nicking it."

That made sense, well as much as sense as anything else did at that moment.

"So what now? What cunning plan does the master 'Acquirer' have to make the switch? Are you going to flood the room with smoke, set off the fire alarm or hang suspended from the ceiling to replace the idol without anyone seeing you?"

"I want you to attract the guard's attention." Kit could see this was not what Stella expected. It was good to see that she had a fertile imagination. That was always useful in more creative and stimulating ventures. "Chat to him. You're a beautiful woman." He heard the beautiful woman snort out loud skeptically. "You are beautiful. Have you never been told that?" He watched as Stella shook her head. It appalled Kit to think that no one, male or female had told her that. Were they blind or just stupid? "You are the most stunning woman I have ever met."

Okay, flattery was good so Stella was now inclined to go ahead with whatever method Kit suggested.

"Then what?"

"I'll put the real idol back."

It all seemed a little too simple to Stella.

"What if I can't hold his attention?"

"You will."

It was okay for Kit to be so confident. He had done this before. This was Stella's first attempt at what was technically law breaking. Was it breaking the law to return something? It seemed a grey area to her.

"But what if I can't?"

"Take your top off."

"What," Stella hissed as quietly as she could under the circumstances.

"Show him your breasts. They would stop me in my tracks."

"That's disgusting." How could Kit supposedly love her and say that?

Kit knew what she was thinking. He had no intention of any other man touching Stella.

"It's a last resort." She was obviously pissed off at him. "I'm not going to let anyone touch you but me." Stella was looking slightly mollified at his words. "But don't you think it's exciting for someone to look at you, want you and know they can never have you?" Kit saw a sudden look of interest spark in Stella's eyes.

Since Kit put it like that she could do it if she had to. She'd never thought about driving some man to distraction by such a simple action. It might be fun.

"I want you to know I don't just show anyone my breasts to anyone." Stella moved closed to him and poked him the chest with her finger. "You are damn lucky you saw them, let alone tasted them." Even as she said the words, Stella remembered the feel of Kit's mouth on her breast and she felt the sudden response of heat between her legs. She bit her lip. Now was not the time to be thinking those thoughts.

"I know and I'm grateful, princess." Kit was amused and aroused that Stella was getting turned on by the situation.

"I won't be doing the breast thing unless it's a dire emergency."

"That's all I expect. Go over and chat to him."

"About what?" How did she keep that man dressed in blue interested long enough for Kit to do his thing?

"How do you normally chat up men?"

"I don't."

"Another first together."

"Shut up, Stella hissed as she stalked over to guard thinking of inane chatter to distract the man. "Hi, can you help me..." and the flow of words just blithered out.

Kit went over the glass case holding the replacement idol and started working on the combination. He glanced quickly at Stella. She was chatting her head off. What a pro. After this was finished he would give her a job. She already had his heart.

Stella looked over the guard's shoulder at Kit. He was working away as she was babbling away. She knew the guard was being polite, but he was not interested in what she was saying. If she watched sport she would have said something of a sporting nature but as it was, all she knew about sport was that people seemed to sweat and bleed a lot and for what?

Kit looked at Stella. He needed more time and he could tell by the guard's body language he was going to break off the conversation and move away. Kit mimicked removing his shirt.

"You are kidding..." Stella muttered softly as she looked at him.

"Are you okay, ma'am?" The guard started to turn in Kit's direction

Bloody hell, she was going to have to do it.

"Are you married?"

"No."

"Oh really?" Stella ran her hand down the buttoned front of her magenta shirt. She slowly began to unbutton it. The guard's eyes were riveted on her actions. She had his interest now. His eyes started to bug out as the fabric edges parted to expose her lacy, white bra underneath." She quickly cut her eyes to look at Kit. He was still working on the lock. Damn. Stella slid her shirt off. Kit freed the lid of the display case. Stella took a deep breath and undid her bra freeing her breasts.

"Oh man." The security guard looked down at the exposed flesh and then quickly around him. On seeing no one he pushed Stella into an alcove and grabbed her breasts,

Uh-oh, strange man with his hands on her breasts. This wasn't the plan. She tried to push him away without causing a scene. She couldn't think of a lie to explain why she was willingly topless in a museum tempting a guard from his duty.

"Oh baby, I'm going to suck you 'til you scream."

Just as the man's mouth descended Kit yelled out.

"I told you to stop stripping in front of strange men, darling."

Saved by the thief. The guard shot off her like he had been electrocuted.

"Come with me," Kit grabbed Stella's arm and moved her away from the man. "I'm sorry about this sir. She does it all the time." Kit could see the man was clearly aroused. Hell, Kit was aroused. The thought of taking Stella in the museum right now was number one in his mind.

"Well that was truly embarrassing." Yet weirdly exciting, she had to admit to herself. She stopped and picked up her shirt and bra from the ground. While the man's hands on her breasts were not unpleasant, they just weren't Kit's. "I need to stop and dress." Where was Kit taking all in her topless state?

"You're a hell of a woman, Rowallan." Kit moved down the corridor, fondling her bouncing breasts as he went. He needed to find a place to fuck her now. His cock was hard as steel and demanding action.

"You were turned on by that?" His fingers tugging in her nipple were certainly increasing the pool of moisture between her legs.

"Yeah I was." He stopped, leant down and licked one of her nipples. Stella moaned out loud. "I want you."

Stella pulled Kit's head to his breasts and urged him to suck her.

"Here? Now? Where?" Forget modesty and pretence. She wanted him.

Kit took his mouth off one of her pink wet nipples with a pop, making it bounce. He looked around him. He saw the sign for the ladies rest room. "Come on, princess." He spied a male cleaner nearby. "I'll give you a hundred dollars cash to close the restroom down now."

The male, forty-year-old cleaner locked eyes on Stella's swollen naked breasts.

"You want a place to fuck her?"

"Well?" At that moment, Kit would happily give a thousand dollars to be wet, hot and tight inside Stella for five minutes.

The man's eyes remained on Stella's breasts.

"No money, man, I just want to watch."

The thought of someone watching them made Stella hotter than she could imagine possible. She licked her lips and looked at Kit.

Kit looked at her and smiled. She was turned on. Kit didn't care who watched him.

"Do you want him to watch as I fuck you, princess?" He caressed her breasts softly.

Stella licked her lips in thought. She should say no and be ashamed for even thinking of the possibility of another watching them. It was not right. A good girl would say no and be appalled that man would even ask her. It was immoral and wrong. But the overwhelming urge to be bad and have red hot sex with Kit in front of a stranger was overwhelming.

"Yes..." Stella hissed softly, her eyes locked with Kit's.

Kit pulled her close and kissed her thoroughly. He would have done anything for Stella at that moment.

The cleaner excitedly grabbed a nearby yellow safety cone and pushed open the door to the ladies room.

"She's got to be completely naked." He pushed his trolley inside.

"Done," Kit told the man. "This is going to be good, princess." He pushed Stella into the ladies room. The sign went up and all three people were inside the generic white tiled bathroom.

"You heard the man. He wants you naked, and so do I."

There was so much that was morally wrong about this but so much that was carnally right. Stella unbuckled her jeans and slid them to the floor. The two men watching drank in the pale beauty of her legs.

"I want her underwear," the man said hoarsely his attention riveted to the red scrap of lace between her legs.

"Give it to him." Kit watched as Stella kicked off her shoes and slid out of her panties. She bent down to remove them.

Stella walked over to the man and handed the scrap of lace to him. She felt wild and out of control but she did not care.

"I want her to touch herself." The man ordered his voice hoarse.

Stella felt like she was going to explode. This was one of the most erotic things she had ever done. She was under the control and orders of two men. It was like one of her fantasies coming to life. She wanted to be out of control and being told what to do. Stella looked at Kit. She could see the definite bulge in his trousers. She wanted him to order her to do it. She would do anything for him at that moment.

Kit sensed that Stella wanted to be under anyone's control but her own. The thought of ordering her to be bad made his cock harder than he thought it possible be.

"Touch that sweet clit of yours, princess. We want to see how much pleasure you can give yourself. Let yourself go."

Stella looked at both men. Their attention was riveted on her. She felt powerful. She put her hands to her breasts and started massaging them slowly, pushing them together and tugging on the nipples, imagining Kit sucking them until she was ready to give him anything he wanted. She ran her hands over her rib cage and down the soft swell of her stomach. The idea of touching herself so intimately in front of two men made her feel hot and reckless, and she liked it. She spread her legs wide, knowing the men were devouring her every move. Stella slid three fingers into the folds of her pussy and began slowly rubbing her clit. She knew exactly how to pleasure herself until she came. Just the knowledge that two men watched her so intently made her want to come then and there. She moaned softly and threw her head back. She was already so wet and slippery that it was no effort at all to slide her fingers into her vagina, imagining the

hard, intense pressure of Kit's penis thrusting inside her. Stella bent her knees and pushed her butt back as she sank her fingers in and out of her dripping core. She panted softly as waves of pleasure started to overcome her. She had never orgasmed so quickly under her own hand before.

"Oh man. She's a goddess." The cleaner howled in excitement as Stella continued pleasuring herself.

Kit had never seen a more erotic sight in his life than Stella making herself come in front of him and he wanted to be inside her when she came screaming. He walked over and slowly removed her fingers, raising them to his mouth and kissing them. Her eyes were glazed with passion and he knew no force on earth could stop him taking her then and there. He kissed her lips hard and passionately as his hands molded her breasts.

Stella wanted Kit. Giving herself pleasure was only a substitute for the real thing. She reached down and unzipped Kit's trousers, freeing his impatient, rock hard cock. This was what she wanted inside her. She ran her hand up and down the length of it in a gentle milking action.

The cleaner groaned at her hand pumping away on the other man's cock. He wished it was him.

"How are you going to do her?"

"How do you want me to do her?" Kit felt Stella stiffen at his words. A complete stranger was making the rules and he knew it excited Stella beyond all imagining. Kit was so turned on he didn't care what happened as long as he could be inside this woman he loved.

Stella looked at Kit, awaiting the man's response. If they stopped now she would curl up and die.

"Do her on her hands and knees." The cleaner reached into his trolley and pulled out a towel which he spread on the ground. "I don't want the lady to be uncomfortable."

Stella smiled wickedly at both men. It was kind of funny that they wanted her all hot, naked and depraved as long as she was comfortable.

"Condom." Stella held her hand out to Kit. She wanted to be fucked now.

Kit felt around in his pocket and swore.

"Frig! I don't have one."

"I do, man!" The cleaner reaching into his bulging pants and pulled out a small foil packet and handed to Stella.

Stella leaned in and kissed the man's cheek. The man groaned at such a simple action. He grabbed his crotch in response. Stella smiled at his reaction. He may be making the rules but he was just a man who could easily be brought to his knees by the thought of sex. She opened the packet and removed the condom.

"It's black." And wickedly ribbed—not that Kit needed any extra help, but those ribs looked awfully thick and stimulating. She turned to the man "You're not black."

What was the point of a black condom if you were white? She looked down at Kit's tumescent cock. It would be interesting it seeing it all black though. Maybe there was a point after all. And those ribs...

"The ladies like 'em black."

Stella didn't want to imagine him and the "ladies". She just wanted Kit inside her, black, white or whatever. She grabbed his cock and rolled on the ribbed condom. *Oh my. There was something to be said about black and it wasn't always slimming.*

"You heard the man, get on the floor," Kit said as he watched Stella drop gracefully to the ground at his command. He groaned as she positioned herself on her hands and knees and pushed her ass up invitingly at him. She looked so damned hot and tempting. With that rounded ass in the air, there was no way Kit was going to pay any attention to anything but that. He dropped his trousers, ignoring the cleaner and positioned himself on his knees behind Stella's plump ass.

"Please Kit. I'm so hot. I want you now." She didn't care who heard or saw her she just wanted action. She was so hot and achy she was going to explode if he didn't slide inside her that very minute.

"Do you want me to fuck you hard or slow, princess?"

"Fuck me hard, fuck me now." As Kit slammed hard into her, Stella shrieked and the man howled in delight, unzipping himself.

Kit thrust in and out of her vagina several times in long, hard strokes then withdrew suddenly. He heard Stella whimper in protest. Kit looked down at his rubber covered cock. It was wet from Stella's juices. Kit smiled. It was time to try something different with his lady. He prodded the cleft of her ass with his lubricated cock.

"Kit?" Stella panted questioningly as she felt his hands spread the cheeks of her backside. He wouldn't would he? The thought of it made her moan with longing. Any way this man was inside her was good as long he was inside touching the core of her.

Kit eased past the ring of muscles then thrust hard into the virgin territory of her hot ass, his testicles slapping into her soft skin.

The feel of Kit's cock hard and full inside her ass was a shock. Never in her life had Stella been taken in the ass. It felt so primal and wild and just damn good. She felt Kit wrap one arm around her waist as his other hand slipped between the folds of her pussy and massaged her clit before his fingers slid into her vagina. Stella had never felt anything as intense. It was like being fucked from every angle. Her breasts swung back and forth under her as Kit rode her at a wild pace. She started screaming as the orgasm hit her.

"Oh man!" the cleaner grunted as he came in his own hand. He was so glad he had taken this shift.

Kit continued pounding into her until he came with a furious spasm that rocked his body.

"I love you."

“Oh Kit...” Stella dropped to the ground as Kit pulled out of her ass. She had never felt so sated in her life.

“Hey you two can come here any time. You guys are a hot couple.”

Kit pulled Stella to her feet and kissed her tenderly.

“You hear that? We’re a hot couple.”

Chapter Nine

"This is the idol!" Stella could not believe her eyes. They had been back at her home for only moments and the real Beldarq idol was in her hands. And it wasn't supposed to be. It was supposed to be at the Queensland Museum with people pressing their noses against its nice, shiny glass case and oohing and ahing over it. They had stuffed up big time.

"What?" Kit stiffened. He knew what was going to come next. Stella was smart. It wouldn't take her long to work it out.

Stella pulled the other idol out of the duffel bag and compared both stones statues. She remembered what Kit had said about one looking too perfect and the other not looking perfect enough. In one hand she knew she held a fake and the other she was certain was the real idol. She weighed them up thoughtfully. The perfect one wasn't in the bag. That meant it could only be in one place. The museum.

"This one's fake but this one's real." Bloody hell. They had swapped the wrong one. Stella looked into Kit's eyes in alarm. He didn't look alarmed. If anything he looked uneasy as if waiting for an explosion. It was then she knew. "You never meant to replace the original, did you?" How dumb had she been? She was usually quicker on the uptake than this.

"No." There was no other answer Kit could give. He was an expert at making up lies. It was his living to have a silver tongue and a quick hand. However, with Stella Rowallan it was different. He didn't want to lie to her. He loved her. And he could see by the shock and hurt in her face she felt betrayed.

"You lied." And the fact that he had, cut deep. What else could he lie so easily about?

"Yes I lied." There was no excuse. He was what he was.

"Why?" Stella knew the reason had to be money. That much was obvious but she needed to hear it from Kit. Why on earth had she trusted and expected the best from an acknowledged thief? It, of course, came down to one thing. She had been so caught up with the sexual thrill of being with Kit that she had almost started to believe that he had fallen in love with her. Almost. She didn't know a whole lot about the love stuff but she did know people in love weren't supposed to lie to each other.

Kit sighed. How did he make someone like Stella understand without losing her from his life forever?

"It's my living, princess. I can't change what I do or how I am."

"I'm not asking you to change." Stella wouldn't ask that of anyone. People changed because that chose to, not because they were forced to. "I had expected you to honor your promise and return the idol."

"It's wasn't that simple."

"But it was. This idol is living history, Kit." Stella placed the idols back in the duffel bag. "The people of Beldarq own it, not just one greedy individual. Can't you see that?"

"That's a romantic ideal, Stella. The people of that country wouldn't know the difference between the real and the fake idol. Their lives remain the same regardless." Kit did understand how Stella felt. History was important but just who owned what part of it had never intervened in Kit's money making plans before. A pang of guilt ran through him. It felt foreign and uncomfortable. Stella Rowallan was his conscience. He had never owned one before. She could make him a better man, if he chose to follow her lead. But it was hard to change a way of life that you were used to.

Stella threw her hands up into the air in irritation. She didn't have a romantic bone in her body, and Kit accusing her of such feelings seemed patronizing to her. She could not help it if she knew right from wrong.

"Oh I see, you basically returned a fake to sit alongside the museum's replacement fake so they would think they had the original and then you, the museum and the government would all be happy with the outcome." And in some ways, that was not necessarily a bad plan. It just was not the right thing to do. As far as Stella was concerned, you did not mess around with history.

"I'm not hurting anyone."

"Only me," Stella felt like yelling at Kit. Why she had let someone she had known for such a short time get under her skin was beyond her. She wanted to believe it was just sex. She knew the truth of it and dressing it up as some nice fairytale about falling in love was ludicrous.

"So this all works out nicely for you then. You get your mad witch mate off your back as she would think you no longer had the real idol and then you sell it for a huge price." Stella shook her head sadly. She was not a saint but she had some morals. He had none. "You're a piece of work, Kit Kincaid."

"Princess..."

"Do not princess me," Stella snapped at him. She had almost come to like that nickname and the husky way he said it. "You are full of bullshit."

"Let me explain..."

"What? That you are a liar and a cheat and your word means nothing?" Stella did not want to hear half-assed explanations. She was sure he could roll them out at the drop of a hat. "You promised me you would return the idol. But then how stupid am I to believe the word of a man I've known for barely a day?"

"You can believe me."

"Oh please, like I could do that now. If your word cannot be trusted then neither can you." Stella gave people only one chance to stuff up. Once it was blown, that was it. It was probably not rational or reasonable, but life had taught her to be that way.

Kit grabbed Stella's hands in his. He had to make her believe him and trust him. For the first time in his life he was willing to do anything other than cheat and steal and lie to get what he wanted.

"I love you."

Stella arched her eyebrows cynically. She wondered if he practiced that sincere look or if it just came naturally to him. That sincere look would be an excellent weapon to have in his thief repertoire. *No really officer, I didn't steal it, it jumped into my hand.*

"And yeah Kit, I really believe that—not." She tried to pull her hands from his but Kit held fast as if afraid to let her go.

"You cannot deny what is between us."

"We have nothing but sex between us." To acknowledge any more than that would cause her pain later on. It was better to stop this now before she got into real trouble by being hurt by him. Kit was just the sort of man who she would be dumb enough to fall in love with and she refused to let that happen. She managed to pull her hands from the strong, warmth of his.

"It's more than sex and you know it." Kit ran a frustrated hand in his hair. "Tell me, have you ever felt the same passion for me as you have for other man?"

"That's irrelevant." She had only had a few lovers in her life and none could hold a candle to Kit Kincaid.

"No that's real. I didn't make you have sex with me."

"No you didn't and I take responsibility for all my actions." Stella closed her eyes as she thought about the wanton way she behaved at the museum. She didn't regret it. It was more that she knew that would haunt her for the rest of her days. Some moments in your life you never forgot. She opened her eyes to see Kit's eyes soft on hers. She refused to get sucked into him again. "You must have thought you hit the jackpot with me dropping my knickers so easily. I acted like a total slut with you."

Kit shook his head. He knew what Stella was doing. She was trying to push him away as fast as she could. Stella knew as well as he did what they had together was no flash in the pan. It was real and it was true and couldn't be hidden from.

"No you just did what you felt. You shouldn't feel ashamed. You wanted me and I wanted you. We both know there's more than just sex between us." Kit knew it and acknowledged it. Stella was choosing not to know.

"I've barely known you a day and I've had sex with you more times than I've probably had it in my entire life." Actually she could not really remember having sex until Kit came along. The previous encounters had been pale imitations of the real thing.

"Stella..." Kit reached out to her.

Stella backed off. If he touched her now she knew she would give in and forget that he had lied to her. She wanted more than that in her life. If he had to remain true to himself then so did she.

"Just leave, Kit. I don't want you or your idol. You're a thief. You lie and steal for a living. I want more from a man." She wanted him but she wasn't going to accept him on the terms he offered.

"What about what we have?" Kit could not leave it like this. He wanted this woman.

"What, sex?" Stella was not about to allow herself to believe it was anything more.

"It's more than that and you know it."

"It was a moment of weakness on my part." A glorious, knee shaking moment with a man who made her feel both powerful and weak at the same time.

"Who's lying now?"

It was a case of one liar calling another liar out.

"I don't need you or this is my life right now."

"You don't know what you need." But then Kit knew this wasn't her fault. She had grown up in a loveless state-funded atmosphere. How could someone like Stella easily accept love and acknowledge need when she had no experience of either? This wasn't just about him lying about the idol.

Stella knew Kit was right. She didn't have a clue but she wasn't going to settle for anything less than the best for her, whatever that may be.

"A night with me does not make you an expert." Stella was hardly an expert on herself either. That was clear in some of crazy things she had done with this man. Things she could never have imagined herself doing before.

Kit sighed tiredly. He was getting nowhere fast with Stella.

"So you're back to being stropky?"

"Yes, so piss off."

Kit knew it was pointless to explain his reasoning to Stella in the mood she was in. Her mind was closed off to all reasoning. He couldn't change who he was. Yet for one split second at the museum he had nearly swapped back the real idol. But he didn't. He made a decision and kept the real one. Of course Kit had hoped she wouldn't find out, but he also knew there was every chance she would, as Stella Rowallan was intelligent enough to spot and remember differences.

"I'll go but there is no way this is over."

Stella shrugged as nonchalantly as she could manage. There was no way his leaving was going to look like it affected her.

"Whatever. Just go." Stella watched as Kit scooped up the duffel bag and left, shutting her front door softly. She stood for a long moment staring at the closed door determined not to give in to what she felt at that moment. She was not going to cry

over a man she had barely known for less than twenty four hours. Besides that she hadn't cried in years and she was too damn tough to start now. Experience had taught her tears got you nowhere.

"I need ice cream." Stella went to the refrigerator and ripped open the top of the vanilla ice cream she had set aside for emergencies such as this. "You big dummy," she sniffed as she cried into the ice cream carton. She wasn't so tough.

* * * * *

"My lady wants a meeting with you."

Stella had been outside pruning the small tress and shrubs that dotted her garden when this rent-a-henchman turned up. What was it with the sidekicks of the evil and the insane? They all looked the same. Big, dumb and ugly and undoubtedly looking like they should be named "Igor".

"Tell her to sit and spin, Igor." Stella was not about to go and meet this crazy witch woman. As far as she was concerned, the whole idol-Kit-Kincaid-thing was over. She wanted no more of it. She had shrubs to prune, or – in this case – torture. She looked at some of her handiwork. She wasn't proud of it. Maybe pruning in her current emotional state had been a bad thing to do. Stella had cut a few of them close to the bone. She told herself that these Australian natives were hardy and that an intense, vicious pruning would see them full off foliage and flowers next year. That or she would have a yard full of upstanding sticks and she would have to re-plant. Stella decided she would worry about that tomorrow. She turned and looked at the man. "Are you still here?" Did he need bus fare? A note signed by her saying that said threat had been given?

"My lady is very powerful. You should not cross her." He looked down menacingly at her.

He could be as menacing as he liked. Stella wasn't in the mood for attitude from him. She had her own attitude to deal with and she could out-attitude him any day of the week.

"Well I'm powerful too, so I suggested you back off, ugly boy." Stella may have been a foot and a half shorter than he was but she was not going to allow this bully to frighten her.

"She told me to tell you that Kincaid's life is in your hands."

Stella arched her eyebrows cynically. Really, who were these people? Sexy thieves and whacked out witches. What next, trolls and pixies demanding her attention?

"Well, that's very dramatic sounding, Igor," Like Kit could not look after himself. The man was a born survivor.

"My lady said she knows what he means to you and that she knows you will come to her."

"Well, it seems she's just a font of knowledge, isn't she." No one ordered Stella to go anywhere. "Tell her thanks but no thanks and please leave me alone."

"She will meet you at the kiosk on Marchant Park."

"You tell your lady friend to buy a long cold drink as she waits because I won't be turning up."

"You will do as my lady requests,"

Stella picked up her pruning shears in both hands and glared menacingly at the man.

"I'd run away from me now, Igor, as I am excessively hormonal and I know how to use these." Stella slashed the blades together just for effect. It was enough. Igor left. He was not as dumb as he seemed. The power of a woman's hormones could bring any man to his knees.

Stella took a deep breath and contemplated the low hanging branches of a coconut ice grevillea. There was no way she was going to any meeting with this Camille woman. What for? How could she possibly have Kit's life in her hands when she didn't have that liar scoundrel in her life?

"I'm not going," Stella muttered to herself. "No bloody way."

Chapter Ten

"Okay, what do you want, Camille?" Against her best intentions and the fortification of a bowl of ice cream, Stella had given in and turned up at Marchant Park to meet with the twisted sister. The woman was dressed in her weird medieval clothing. That she was beautiful was unquestionable, along with the fact she was greedy and very possibly nuts.

"I want the idol." Camille knew the woman would come despite her earlier refusal. It was clear to Camille that Stella Rowallan loved Kit Kincaid, even if it wasn't clear to the woman in question. That made her useable.

"Well clearly, I don't have it." Stella spread her hand spread out, empty of everything but her car keys. The park was crowded with healthy people doing the fitness thing and families doing the togetherness thing. It was a nice big patch of green in a crazy city.

"But Kit does." Camille looked at the woman speculatively. How far could she push her she wondered?

Stella looked at the redhead with deadpan eyes. She could think what she liked. She was getting no information out of Stella. That Kit was a liar was undoubted. However, she wasn't about to rat on him to this nutcase.

"I wouldn't have a clue what Kit does and doesn't have."

"You're his woman." Camille watched as the woman stiffened slightly, betraying her feelings. She could tell there was a story there.

"No, I'm not." The sooner this "witch" dealt with that the better. Stella herself would deal with the issue later herself.

"You're with Kit."

Stella hated explaining herself to anyone let alone people she didn't like.

"No, it was nothing more than a one night stand." Even saying those words made Stella feel slightly sad. Was that all it really was? It seemed so much more. Yet she knew it was unrealistic to think otherwise.

"I don't believe you." This one had fallen hard for Kit. Camille understood that only too well.

"I don't care what you believe."

"I saw the way Kit looked at you," Camille said wondering what he saw in this woman. She was attractive, but nothing extraordinary. Kit stole rare and beautiful things for a living. Why her? Camille's interest was piqued. "You are special to him."

"Look Camille, if this is some sort of jealousy thing, you can have him." Even as she said the words she hated the thought of this woman or any other with Kit. But eventually another woman would be and she had to get over it. As for Stella, she had already decided not to have sex again. It was all too complicated and emotional for her. "I'm not fighting for him."

"Get me the idol."

"Give me a break." Stella wasn't about to be ordered about by this drag queen. "What is it with you people? It's a figure that belongs to history. You can't buy and sell that."

"You don't understand," Camille told her dismissively.

"And you know what? I don't want to." Although the concept of greed was not hard to comprehend.

"It's a fertility goddess."

Stella already knew that. Kit had told her the same thing.

"Are you looking to get pregnant, Camille? Raise you own little coven of medieval throwbacks?"

Camille smiled at her words. Attitude had its place. But it did not hurt or deter her from her purpose.

"I want the power within the idol."

"You know you could probably get that eating an energy bar for breakfast."

"You held it in yours hands. What did you feel?" Camille could tell by the look in her eyes she had felt something unaccountable.

Stella had felt something but she was not going to say what. The less this one knew that better.

"I felt it belonged back with its people."

"Her people have no concept of how to appreciate her."

"And you do?" Stella sighed tiredly. She was well and truly over chatting with Camille. There were just so many megalomaniacs you could deal with in one day.

Camille looked at Stella Rowallan. This was not a happy woman. And it had nothing to do with their meeting.

"Kit has really hurt you hasn't he?"

"We're not doing the sisterly bonding thing so just forget it." Stella had no intention of crying over Kit with this woman.

"He will come back to you." That much Camille knew. Kit was not someone who would turn his back on true love.

"And I will shut the door in his face." Why was she even discussing Kit with this woman? Probably because it was the one topic that was constantly on Stella's mind.

"If I hurt Kit, would be you upset?" Camille assessed her thoughtfully.

"No." Of course Stella would be but admitting weakness to this woman was the last thing she wanted to do as people like Camille thrived on the fear and weakness of others.

"You're a liar."

"And you're a cow." Stella had had enough. She had better things to do than stand and talk to Camille. "Is this what this I 'hold his life in my hands' crap comes from?"

"You do," Camille told her. "Kit loves you." And that meant he would do anything for Stella Rowallan. That was how she would get back the idol.

"Kit loves money." Stella had to remember that as first and foremost.

"Get me the idol and I will not hurt him."

Stella weighed up the threat and found it wanting. Yes, Camille wanted the idol. But as for hurting Kit, she doubted it. Deep down, Camille still loved Kit and that kind of love never died.

"Well, this had been truly dramatic, Camille. And great dress, by the way. You know, I don't know why more designers aren't doing the creepy, medieval witch thing. But I must be going."

"Kit will die if you do not get me the idol."

A cold shiver ran down Stella's spine. The woman meant it. Whether she carried the threat out was another thing.

"Are we done here?"

"Choose wisely, Stella Rowallan."

* * * * *

"Oh for God's sake. Haven't I dealt with you people enough today?" Stella tried to close her front door on Kit Kincaid.

"Let me in, Stella." Kit knew he could quite easily shove the door open, demanding entry, but he did not want to push Stella any further away than he already had.

Stella knew she had no option but to let Kit in. She didn't want to be conducting her personal business out on the doorstep with the neighbors overhearing that she had sex with a thief who had slept with a witch to steal a priceless artifact to sell for a huge amount of money. At the moment her life could beat a television soap opera any day. And she didn't want the Police turning up on her doorstep on an anonymous tip, to test her skill at lying.

"Whatever this is, make it quick." Stella walked into her lounge room and waited to hear whatever he had to say. Hopefully it would be quick and painless and she could get on with her life.

"You know we have to talk, princess." Kit had spent a sleepless night wondering how to get Stella back in his life. He could not even concentrate on business. And that

had never happened before. The pursuit of Stella was much more important than the pursuit of money. She was now his main priority in life.

"Okay, all I have to say is Camille wants to kill you over the idol."

"You saw Camille?" This was not something Kit wanted to hear. Camille was a loose cannon.

"She summoned me. She said I hold your life in my hands or some other dramatic drivel."

Kit smiled softly at Stella. She could deny it all she liked but she loved him. If she didn't, she wouldn't have gone to see Camille to find out why she was threatening his life. It gave Kit hope. He couldn't care less how long they had known each other. Love happened and it wasn't to be thrown away on technicalities.

"You were worried about me."

"No, I just remembered what you said about her maiming you and I thought I would just check out what she had to say."

"As a public service."

Stella always felt suddenly warm when she was alone in a room with Kit. She wanted to believe it was early onset menopause and not that she wanted him on her and in her and a part of her. She was over him – well, pretty much.

"I would do that for anyone." Depending entirely on who the person was, of course, but Kit did not need to know this. He knew more than enough about her.

"Would you?" Kit would be more than happy to sweep Stella into his arms and kiss away whatever hurt she was feeling. But now was not the time. She had her hands on her hips and her stance indicated she would fight whatever he had to offer. He wanted her to come to him willingly.

"Bottom line is the girl wants the idol. Give it to her, don't give it to her, it's all the same to me. Just leave me out of it."

"I can't." Kit knew that as well as Stella did. They were not destined to be apart.

"You can. You just never darken my doorstep again."

"I love you, princess."

"And I love vanilla ice cream but that does not mean it's good for me." As much as Stella wanted to believe he loved her, she couldn't. Maybe it had a lot to do with the fact she had never been loved in any way by anyone one. Maybe it was the whole timing of meeting him. Maybe she was just scared. Whatever it was, survival instincts told her to go carefully with her heart.

Kit sighed in frustration. He wanted to be back with Stella. His heart and soul demanded it.

"If I give Camille the idol will you be happy?"

"Yes...no, don't give it to that nutcase. She probably has all sorts of wacky things she plans to do with it—world domination, decorative doorstoppers. She's nuts. Just take it back to the museum."

"Will you trust me if I do?" At this moment Kit would do anything to gain Stella's trust.

Kit didn't understand that it was the right thing to do. He had a different set of values from Stella. He was in things to get things. If he returned the idol he expected Stella to return to him. She knew he wanted to be with her. But there was still that issue of trust between them and trust was hard to give when the one time you believed someone's promise they broke it.

"Kit, this thing that sprang up between us was wild and exciting, but it's over. It's not meant to continue. It's like wildfire, it has burnt itself out." Her words were lies, of course, but she had to say them just the same. This whole thing with Kit had shaken her little world pretty badly and Stella needed to get some perspective. "I want more than this." However wanting more and getting more were two different things. It wasn't just Kit she didn't trust completely. In different circumstances, she could even possibly accept he was a thief. What she doubted was herself. Was what she was feeling for Kit just sexual or something more? "I want more than just sex."

"You know in your heart you are wrong. We have so much more than sex and you know it. And you can throw that up at me as many times as you like but it still doesn't change the way we truly feel about each other." Kit knew by the look in her eyes there was no point staying and trying to convince Stella otherwise. The woman needed time to think.

Stella worried about what might happen if she dropped her guard and gave in to her thief and he left? Surely it was better to stop the heartache now before she gave into the feelings that were threatening to spill over and overwhelm her?

"Good bye, Kit."

* * * * *

"What the..." One minute Stella had been pulling grocery shopping out of her car and the next she was...where? Where was this? She tried to sit up but she realized her hands and legs were bound — she was spread eagled and tied to some weird stone table she was lying on. And she was naked. Just the sort of way a woman wanted to wake up in a strange place. Stella raised her head and looked down at her naked body, seeing weird symbols painted on her breasts and thighs. What the hell else had happened to her when she was out cold? Waking up as a naked finger painting was not exactly reassuring.

"Welcome to my home Stella," Camille said as she glided over to her, touching the bound woman softly.

Stella flinched under her touch. She was picky who touched her, especially when she was naked.

"Do you tie everyone up naked and paint on them?" Stella took in her surroundings. How clichéd was this place? Pictures of the pentacle symbol on the walls, crystals on shelves and masses of candles that burnt brightly, casting eerily shadows everywhere. Where did this woman shop? Witches R Us? And how long had Stella been knocked out? It had been daylight when Stella had gone shopping, now it was night. Had she been lying naked all that time? And if so what had this woman been doing to her? The fact that Camille had caught her was frightening.

"I need Kit to give me the idol. We watched you. We heard you tell him not to give me the idol, so we know he won't."

This freaky woman and her coven of crazies had been staking out her house?

"I don't have that much power over Kit, and get your hands off me." Camille's fingers were circling the painted symbols on Stella's body and there was not a damn thing she could do about it. The woman may have slept with Kit but clearly she was interested in anyone. Stella suspected that making her helpless was some crazy power trip for Camille. Well, power trips did not work on Stella Rowallan.

"I can see why Kit likes you. You're very fuckable."

"I don't bat for your team, witch woman." If she didn't consider spitting a disgusting habit Stella would have lobbed one right in the witch's eye.

Camille slid her fingers down Stella's legs. She felt the shiver run through Stella's body.

"Don't do that!" Stella yelled out loudly as the woman's fingers toyed with her. She was no lesbian and wouldn't be treated like some plaything to this demented woman. Okay, the spitting thing now seemed doable. How did one go about that? Why had she never had the sense to hang out with the tough girls at school? They always knew how to spit, smoke and swear.

Camille removed her fingers. She did not like the virginal prudish types. That sort needed to be taught a lesson. She smiled in anticipation of what she was going to do to this woman.

"Well, we have to persuade you in some way to make Kit give up the idol."

"It ain't going to happen, so just back off, Betty." Hell, Stella could have been a tough girl at school if not for the glasses and braces and acne...

Camille laughed at the woman's bravado.

"Oh, I can change your mind. Marco, come here," Camille ordered, a sneering smile on her lips. She intended to have some fun with Kit's little girlfriend.

Stella's eyes widened as the most gigantic man she had ever seen approached her. He was all muscle and she could feel the heat rising from his body. Oh God, what was this about? Camille she could handle, but this guy?

"Please show dear little Stella here that Kit Kincaid is not the be-all and end-all when it comes to men. Show her how you persuade your women to behave, Marco."

The man called Marco smiled wickedly at Stella, who in turn gulped loudly. The massive expanse of his chest was impressive as it tapered down to taut, lean hips and the largest bulge in the man's trousers. This man was all pumped up muscles and promise. Stella had heard that black men were well hung but she never imagined it was true, and not to this extent. What was he going to do to her? The sudden fear of getting raped sent a chill of dread up her spine.

"I realize this is some perverted game of control to you, witch woman, but you aren't going to succeed. You cannot humiliate me." Stella did not doubt that Camille could hurt her and possibly make her want to cry but there was no way she would be humbled before this baggage.

"It's not about humiliation. I just want to have a little fun while we await your knight in shining armor." Camille could see the panic on Stella's face and she was enjoying it. Stella was completely bound and helpless to prevent anything they chose to do to her. It amused Camille to have control over people. "Don't worry, dear, Marco won't rape you. What was it you said? He 'bats for another team'. But he does like to tease women. Show Stella what a tease you are.

Stella stiffened in alarm as the man called Marco pulled out a knife. He was going to cut her and there was not a damn thing she could do about it.

"Even if you cut me I'm not going to rat on Kit." She watched as the long blade of the knife made its descent on her body, skimming lightly over her stomach as he followed the paintwork on her naked body. There was nothing teasing in his grip on the knife or the look of intent in the man's eyes.

Camille was enjoying the scene before her. And she had a feeling Kit was somewhere close by. She was always sensitive to his presence. What was he feeling? Why wasn't he stopping what was happening?

"Kit doesn't care enough about you to stop this." *Come out come out wherever you are, kitty kat.*

"You don't know Kit." Stella's eyes widened in fear as the tip of the knife circled one of her nipples. She tried to keep her breathing shallow to stop the rise and fall of her breast towards that knife.

"I know enough to know he would save his ass over yours." Camille could see this woman was hooked on the blond man. She could also see that Marco and his knife were going to have no effect in making the bound woman give in to their demands. She reluctantly admired Stella. The ones full of attitude were always hard to break. Camille clicked her fingers and Marco stepped back.

Stella breathed a sigh of relief. Nipples were safe. Excellent. She had grown mighty attached to them and the pleasure they gave her. She had surprised herself at her own balls at not flinching. She could hold her own in high school now — twenty years too late of course.

"Okay, we both know I'm not going to help you. So what is the point of all this other than to disgust me or give Marco here some employment? And what is this paint

stuff about? Run out of canvas did you?" Stella had to get back on track. She had won a small victory by not showing fear. Now she had to get out of here in one piece.

"The signs on your body are spells calling forth your lover to save you."

While some magic in the universe was unexplainable, a witch finger painting on her body was nothing but sick.

"I have no lover."

"You're not a virgin," Camille responded with a knowingly smile. "Don't worry. No one in here as touched you...yet."

It should have occurred to Stella that they weren't alone but it didn't. She turned her head to see another two other men watching her. Correction, leering at her. They had clearly enjoyed the little floor show they had just witnessed. The fact that they hadn't touched her didn't make her feel comfortable. They certainly looked like they had every intention to do so. And who would stop them? Camille? Hardly. What the hell had Kit seen in this woman other than fucking her for greed? These thief people were a breed of their own.

A sudden noise stopped whatever Camille planned to do.

"Ah, your lover has arrived." Camille was not surprised. She was quite pleased Kit had come as soon as he had.

As relieved as Stella was at the thought of Kit saving her, she was appalled that he was walking into something he wouldn't be able to get out of easily. He was outnumbered, and these people were nuts and nutty people were inclined to pretty much do whatever they wanted. This alone made her scared for Kit. God knows what they planned to do to him.

Kit had arrived just as Marco had moved his knife towards Stella's breasts. Kit had not rushed in for fear of him slicing into Stella in surprise. But he now had every intention of beating the crap out of him for daring to torture his woman, Stella belonged to him. It had made his heart swell with love and pride as he watched her, down but not out, trading insults with Camille.

"Let Stella go." Kit demanded, holding out the idol toward them. "You can have the idol." Two of Camille's coven rushed over to him and grabbed it. Kit did not care what they did to him as long as they let Stella go.

"Let him go." Camille commanded her followers. "Bring the idol to me." Greed shone in her eyes. What she wanted was well and truly in her grasp and nothing else mattered.

Kit shrugged the men off him, handing them the idol.

As the idol was handed to Camille, her eyes glowed with greed. "It'd beautiful and it's all mine."

Kit couldn't care less about Camille and the idol. The only thing that mattered was Stella. He walked calmly yet quickly over to her. He had to get her out as soon as possible.

"You okay, princess?" Kit looked at the artwork on her body. The symbols were vivid and erotically painted around her taut nipples and over the inside of her thighs.

"I'm swell. I'm just lying here like a kindergarten experiment." Stella turned to look at him. She was glad to see him but worried at the same time. "You shouldn't have come." He had endangered himself for her.

"How could I not?" Kit ran a soft finger down her face.

Camille looked up from the idol.

"That is so sweet."

Kit turned on Camille. It sickened him that he had let this part of his life touch Stella.

"You have what you want Camille. Let Stella go."

"Take her by all means. She's too prissy for me."

Stella was just about to let Camille know exactly what she thought of her but a look from Kit silenced her. He was right. Escape first, then start a vendetta with Camille.

Kit pulled a pocket knife from his trousers and cut the bonds holding Stella. He helped her off the stone table. Kit pulled off his sweater, leaving him bare-chested, as he pulled it over Stella's head. The navy blue knit fell to her knees.

"Back away," Kit whispered to her.

"What?" Why was Kit whispering and pushing her gently to a nearby window?

Camille and her followers were too intent on the idol to realize their exit was being made by less than conventional means.

"Why aren't we walking out the door like normal people would?" Stella watched as Kit slid the window open.

There was a slight drop to the ground but he was sure Stella could make it without injury.

"In the short time you've known me have I ever done anything conventional?" Stella shook her head. "It's going to get messy in a moment."

"So someone is coming through the front door," Stella guessed as it was the only logical conclusion and Kit was planning on neither of them being there. "Are you talking violent messy?"

"I plan to beat the crap out of Marco."

"Oh well, that's okay. Can I stick around and punch Camille?"

Kit smiled at her words.

"Maybe another time, princess. You need to go now. I'll follow in a moment." Kit helped Stella onto the window frame and watched as she swung her legs over.

"Be careful."

Kit smiled at her words.

"I know, you'd say that to anyone," he responded before she could. "Get going." He watched as Stella dropped safely to the ground.

Stella found her footing and looked around her. There were a lot of bushes. Where were her pruning shears when she needed them? Suddenly, the sound of police sirens screamed into the night. Stella ducked down. She did not want to be seen wandering around in only a man's sweater in whatever part of Brisbane this was.

"Bloody hell..." she murmured as she watched the police stream in, kicking doors and yelling. Kit was inside. The idol was inside and that equaled big trouble for anyone found with it. Stella agonized over what to do. She didn't want Kit to be taken by the cops, especially as he had just saved her. Stella wanted to hate Kit but she couldn't. He frustrated her. He admitted he was a liar and a thief. Yet there was just something about him that she could not let go of. And it had nothing to do with sex. It was...what?

"Oh frig, I love him." The realization hit Stella hard. She slapped herself in the forehead. When did the love thing creep up on her or had it always been there lurking, waiting to be recognized for what it was? Could you really love someone after such a short time? "Oh God, I don't know," she muttered to herself. Why her? She hadn't been looking for love. And why Kit Kincaid, gentleman thief? What was she supposed to do now? Save his ass in some sort of daring, not-thought-out move? Or did she let him save himself? The theory was if you loved someone you were supposed to help them. Of course, the theory was just that and it did not explain the practicalities of actually saving the person.

"Bloody hell, why isn't life ever easy?" Stella muttered to herself as she moved slowly over to the window and looked inside. Lots of cops, Camille and her entourage. Stella was pleased to see the witch was nabbed. No doubt she would have lots of new friends in jail to body paint. Stella searched the melee. She noticed Marco had a furiously bleeding nose. That had to have been from her thief but where exactly was Kit? Had they taken him? Was he hurt? What the heck was she supposed to do?

"Hey," Kit snuck up behind Stella and whispered into her ear.

Stella, in turn, hissed out a shriek and slapped his bare chest. He had given her the fright of her life. She turned on him in a mixture of anger and confusion.

"What are you doing out here?" As thrilled as she was to see him in one piece and not in police custody, that didn't mean he should be allowed to sneak up on her like that.

"Worried about me, princess?" Kit looked down at Stella, so small, cranky and vulnerable looking.

"No, not at all. I figured you were big and ugly enough to get yourself out of whatever that was." Stella pulled down hard on the sweater as she felt the night air on her legs.

Kit smiled knowingly at her defensive scowl.

"You were worried."

"The cops..."

"I know..."

It now made sense to Stella why she had exited out the window and not the door. Kit had known the police were coming.

"You called them. You planned this." What were the chances a thief would willingly call in law enforcement?

Kit liked that about Stella. He did not have to explain things to her. She understood a situation straight away. She would make a great thief.

"Yes, I did. I wanted Camille caught with the idol, so I placed an anonymous call as any good upstanding citizen does."

"Upstanding my ass." And why was he grinning like an idiot at her? It was all his fault she had been dragged into this in the first place. "You could have been taken by the cops."

It felt nice to Kit to have someone worried about his welfare. He wanted to return that favor.

"I'm a thief remember? I'm good at not getting caught." He pushed a stray hair back from Stella's face. "Were you checking if I was okay?" He remembered how he found her looking anxiously through the window.

"I was wondering how much it would cost to bail you out of jail." She shivered slightly, telling herself it was the night air and lack of clothing and nothing to do with the soft fingers on her face.

"You would do that for me?"

"Possibly...if you called...if there was no one else."

"As a friend?"

Why did this have to be so complicated? The reason was obvious of course. Kit Kincaid was not someone that could be dismissed lightly or forgotten easily.

"Something liked that."

Kit leaned down and looked into her Stella's eyes.

"So you're saying you would save this thief's ass if he were in trouble?"

Stella threw her hands in the air in frustration. All she knew was she needed to go home and put on some clothes. This was the second night in a row she had been running around half naked with him.

"I don't know."

"Yeah you do, princess."

Stella looked at him warily. She was tired. She didn't want to get into a discussion about the possibility being in love with Kit. She needed time to analyze, agonize and eat chocolate. What if it was just the stress of the moment that had her thinking gooey thoughts about love?

Kit noticed the sudden look of realization on Stella's face. He smiled broadly.

"You've just worked out you love me."

Stella snorted indignantly at his stunningly correct assumption. Thief and mind reader—add card shark and they were bound for Las Vegas to win a fortune.

"No, I'm just tired and hungry and I think I have a leg cramp."

Kit moved toward her, smiling as she backed pedaled away from him.

"You love me."

"I don't want to discuss this." She backed into the trunk of a large melaleuca tree.

"But I do, and I know something that's really good for leg cramps." Kit said as he placed his hands on either side of her body to stop her from moving.

"I suppose it's sex." Stella knew it was. That look in his eyes was most definitely sexual and possessive. A surge of excitement ran through her veins. "That's your answer to everything." Though all things considered, it was a mighty fine answer, and she did have a leg cramp...

"I think you need to have me inside you now."

"What? Here?" Stella snapped out, even though she knew that was exactly when she wanted. "The police..."

"The police will just think that we are lovers just doing what comes naturally." Kit's hands roamed up the inside of the sweater she wore. "Come on don't you want to erase the unpleasant memories of this evening with my cock up inside you?"

Well when he put it like that...

"No, I don't think this is a good idea." What happened to her plans?

"Liar, liar pants on fire," Kit teased as he pushed the sweater up over her hips.

"I don't have any pants on," responded Stella in a husky voice that surprised her. Could she? Should she? She was already wet and ready for action.

Kit smiled at the sound of her voice. Stella wanted him as much as he wanted her.

"I know you have no panties on and I'm going to take full advantage of that." Kit lifted her into his arms, liking the way her legs, cramp free, automatically wound around him in acceptance. "Hold on, princess. He pushed her back against the tree, holding her with one arm and his body as he freed his already straining cock. It automatically moved to her pussy.

"Kit I..." Stella gasped as she once again felt the welcome thrust inside her.

"Don't think...just enjoy."

"Oh God, I really want to hate you..." Stella murmured as her lips descended on his.

"I know, princess." Kit's tongue thrust into her mouth as his cock thrust in and out of the tight, wet core of her. "How's that leg cramp of yours?"

"Shut up and fuck me, lover boy." Stella felt the familiar spiral of excitement building up inside her. She pulled Kit to her and urged him on with a low moan.

Kit melded his mouth to hers and took the scream within him as she came. He growled with satisfaction as his cock spurted hotly inside her. The thought of Stella

being pregnant with his child drove him on to expel every drop inside her. He wanted everything with this woman. Love, a future, the good, the bad and the ugly. Nothing less would do.

Stella slid weakly out of his arms. What was wrong with her? She was so overcome with lust she had not used a condom. What an idiot. This could never happen again. Unplanned pregnancies with a thief she was pretty sure she loved did not seem to be the smartest move at the moment. She pushed away from Kit.

"I want to go home... alone."

"I'll take you."

"You're never taking me again."

"I'm not talking about sex, princess."

"Good 'cause neither am I." Stella stomped off on wobbly legs. She had to get home in peace and think. One thing was for certain, she was never having sex again. She stopped. "Damn," she cursed out loud. She stomped back. "I need money for a cab."

Kit gave her the money. As much as he wanted to be with her, he realized she needed time to think. Such a lot had happened in a short time.

"See you tomorrow."

Stella stomped off again.

"I'll call if I need you," she yelled over her shoulder, knowing she would make damn sure she was never that needy again.

"You need me, princess."

"I don't need anyone," Stella muttered to herself.

Chapter Eleven

Stella didn't see Kit until late the next day.

"Camille has escaped." Kit watched Stella trudge tiredly up her driveway as she returned home from work. It was clear to him that she hadn't slept. The strain on her face and the dark circles under Stella's eyes made Kit want to pull her to him and try to give her whatever comfort he could. But the lady in question had a clear "don't touch" look about her.

Stella had had the worst day. She had not slept at all the previous night. She then had to front up and work and listen to her whiny pissant boss going on and on about unplanned absences and how she should try and be more considerate and not to get sick in the future. Stella had been so close to quitting. If it had not been for the fact that she had some startlingly large bills and a mortgage to pay she would have told her boss to stick his job in his ear. But she hadn't. She had bitten her tongue and logged on, on work time, to the online job network and applied for any job that seemed half way decent. If she could jump from one job to another, then that would be one less thing to think and worry about.

Stella looked up at the other thing that was on her mind. Kit Kincaid. Why was he here when she specifically told him she did not want to see him? Hadn't she dealt with enough today? The ride home on the train had been a hot nightmare of crammed in bodies. She wasn't up to battling with the thief. And if he was here for sex then he was out of his mind. She was never having sex again. She swore that oath on a wine bottle last night.

"So, why would I care if Camille escaped?" Stella searched in her handbag for her keys. If she had inadvertently locked her keys inside her house this morning she was going to scream. Or maybe puke. Or maybe both. She was a woman on the edge.

"She's a dangerous woman."

"So am I when I have PMS."

Kit was only too aware how ruthless Camille and her followers could be when she wanted something. The only thing that she could possibly want now was revenge. Kit could look after himself. He was worried about Stella.

"I'm being serious, princess."

"So am I, and enough with the 'princess' stuff." Stella sighed with relief as she found her keys. Puking averted. She looked at Kit. He had those big, concerned puppy dog eyes on her. They almost made her want to melt into his arms and allow him to take away all the hurt and tiredness she felt. Almost. The other oath she had sworn on

that bottle last night was she was going to toughen up and not be a ninny over this man.

"Look Kit, you pissed her off and she wants you, not me." Which, after the last interlude with Camille and her paintbrush, was fine with Stella. Just thinking about Camille's coven made her shudder with disgust at the thought of anyone forcing themselves on another person regardless of gender.

"But she knows I love you." That was an unchangeable fact. The only one who did not understand or did not want to understand that was Stella.

Stella didn't want to go over the whole love thing again. She wanted to forget it—and Kit. Of course, both were impossible to ask for.

"How did she escape?"

Kit wasn't particularly surprised that Stella changed the subject. He knew her well enough to know this was the standard diversionary tactic she used when faced with something she didn't want to acknowledge.

"No one seems to know. Two guards were assigned her to take her to the Watchhouse but she never made it. The story is she vanished from the house before they could even get her into the van." Kit knew there had to be more to the story than that, but the police were not divulging anything more.

Stella trudged past Kit up the stairs.

"Maybe the witch thing is true."

The smell of her perfume as she passed made Kit want to reach out and hold her.

"Do you believe that?"

Stella turned to look at him. He was possibly the most fascinating man she had ever met. And she knew in her heart she loved him. But she would never let Kit know that. His power over her was so strong it scared her. "What does it matter what I think? I'm out of the whole thing."

"Are you?" Kit looked back at her meaningfully. He wasn't the only liar.

"I'm not playing any more games with you."

"I want to keep you safe, princess. It would kill me if anything happened to you. Camille knows that."

Stella slid the key into her front door lock and pushed the door open.

"I'm fine." Stella knew she was more than capable of handling the crazy witch woman. It was Kit she couldn't handle.

"Are you really fine?" Kit wasn't and he wasn't scared to admit it.

No, of course she wasn't fine, but he didn't need to know that.

"Is that all you came to tell me?"

"I love you, Stella." Kit watched as she stiffened at his words.

"How can I believe that? You've lied before. In fact, you make a living out of lying."

That was true. Kit knew it and was sorry that he ever had given her reason to doubt him.

"But I never lied about loving you."

"I have to go." Stella didn't add, "before I do something stupid like cry over you."

"This is not the end of us." Kit moved toward her.

Stella walked inside her home, her body barring his entrance.

"There was never really an 'us', Kit. We were two people who had sex, that's all."

It was way more than that and they both knew it, but Kit could see there was no point pushing it further.

"So what now?"

"You go and thief and I'll do what I have to." Which would include breaking into her emergency stash of Tim Tams.

"You'll watch out for Camille?" Kit needed to know Stella would be careful.

"I'll watch out for all intruders," Stella assured him as she shut the door. "...including you" she added softly. Kit Kincaid could not be allowed in her life again.

* * * * *

The next morning, Stella stumbled from her bedroom and into the kitchen searching for coffee. By her calculations she'd had thirty-four minutes of sleep. She was going to be a mighty cranky woman today. Too bad, so sad for those who had to deal with her. She made apologies to no one.

As she rounded the corner and came into the kitchen, Stella stopped in shock.

"Oh what the bloody hell are you doing here?" Stella snapped out loud at the last person she expected to see in her home. "How did you get in?"

Camille smiled at Stella Rowallan.

"I'm a witch." Camilla ran her eyes up and down the woman's pale legs. Her breasts were clearly bare under the tight tank top she wore. She remembered how hot and fuckable the woman had been when she last saw her. It was a pity the woman was so infatuated with Kit Kincaid.

Stella wanted to show no weakness with this woman. She refrained from shuddering in disgust at the lascivious look the woman gave her. What part of "hell no" did she not understand?

"Yes, you *are* a bitch," agreed Stella, deliberately using the 'b' word instead.

Camille was amused that the woman was not going to play along with her game. That was okay. She had the upper hand and Stella would soon know it. She held out a set of keys to Stella.

"I magically let myself in." Camille threw Stella's hidden keys to her.

Stella caught them and dumped them on the counter. So much for her new hiding place under the concrete garden gnome.

"What do you want?" This was no social visit. The sooner it was over the better.

"Do you always wake up grumpy?"

"Piss off."

"Charming."

"What do you want, witch woman?" Stella repeated, not in the mood to play games with this person.

"Maybe I want to see you all hot and tense and scared again."

Stella shook her head in disgust.

"That's never going to happen."

"It happened once," Camille pointed out, amused at the tight, angry set of Stella's lips.

"Only because you had to tie me down and shove a knife at my breasts to do it." Stella looked at her thoughtfully. Camille was no longer wearing her medieval garb. She looked positively average in her jeans and shirt. It was hard to believe just by looking at her that she was such a nutcase. "Now tell me whatever it is you are dying to tell me and then leave."

"I accept the idol is lost. But I've decided if I can't have the idol, then I want Kit's email address." Camille believed the contacts he had on his email files would be like gold.

"I don't know it." Stella did but she was not going to allow this freaky woman access to it.

"He was accessing your computer."

"How do you know?"

"I had people watching you." Camille smiled at Stella's expression. "You really should think about closing the curtains before you go down on a man. Mind you, my followers wherever very impressed with your oral abilities."

That Camille wanted to upset Stella was obvious, however, Stella was not going to take the bait.

"So go look on the computer." She tried to sound as disinterested as possible. While it was true Stella was annoyed at Kit, she was not going to be the means to ruin him.

"I did while you were sleeping. I checked out the history on your hard drive." Camille smiled at Stella's angry expression. "I can bring up the email log in but I don't know Kit's password."

"Oh well too bad for you."

"What is his password?"

"How would I know?"

"Kit's your lover." Camille pointed out. "Lovers tell each other personal things."

"He was someone I had sex with for a short time. Other than bodily fluids nothing personal was shared."

Camille moved over close to Stella. She had to admire her. She did not flinch.

"I want the password."

"Ask Kit."

"Kit's being very uncooperative at the moment."

Stella looked at her. She didn't like the sound of that

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that when my boys caught up with him last night he refused to give us the information we wanted so maybe he got beat up a bit."

Panic mixed with anger surged into Stella.

"You have, Kit?" How badly hurt was he? How could she help him? Stella wanted to throttle the witch then and there but that meant she would never find Kit.

"Oh, have I got your attention now?" Camille asked, knowing full well the woman wanted to beat her up for taking her lover.

"Where is he?"

"Why? Are you going to rush to his aid?"

Stella tried to remember the whereabouts of Camille's house. It had been dark and on the north side of Brisbane. That narrowed it down to half a million homes.

Camille knew what Stella was thinking.

"No, I had to move to another place. The police were too interested in the old one."

"Well maybe they would be interested that you're here." Stella was more than happy to inform on her. Camille was nothing to her and Kit's life was at stake. She would happily see the witch jailed if it meant Kit was safe.

"If the police get me, Kit automatically dies. My boys don't particularly like the fact that he treated me so badly to get the idol.

Stella knew by the look in the woman's eyes that Kit would most certainly die if anything happened to Camille.

"You really hate him for what he did to you." Stella could understand it. It was cruel and manipulative. But Camille was the same and she knew what Kit was like. It could not have come as a surprise to her. But, like everyone, Camille had to build a bridge and get over it. Stella thought about herself and Kit. Maybe she should follow that lesson herself. She was usually more inclined to blow up bridges. Perhaps there was something to be said for leaving them intact.

"I plan to ruin Kit Kincaid. I want his precious list of clients so his credibility is shot to hell and I can blackmail the people on it."

"So money and revenge will make you happy?" Stella doubted it. Greedy people like Camille were never satisfied for long.

Camille was not in the mood to have a philosophical discussion with Kincaid's girlfriend. It annoyed her that Stella Rowallan was not suitably scared of her.

"Just get the password or he dies."

"How am I supposed to get a secure password?" Passwords could be just about anything. Did she know enough about Kit to know what he would use as a password?

"You'll figure it out if his life means anything to you." Camille headed for the door.

"Aren't you going to orb out or are you a broom riding witch?"

Camille smiled tartly the woman.

"You're so not funny."

"And you are laughable, Camille."

"You have four hours to save your man. I'll be in contact with you then for the password."

Great, Stella had four hours to try and pull a rabbit out of a hat.

"No problem..." Stella muttered to herself. It was a huge problem. She liked to think she was smart but attempting to crack into someone's log on seemed out of her depth.

"How did you escape by the way?" Kit had told her Camille had reportedly vanished.

"I dropped to my knees and sucked the cocks of my two watchdogs in my own special plea bargain." Camille saw the disgust on Stella's face. "A girl has to do what a girl has to do." She grinned suggestively at Stella. "You know I would forgo getting the password for a week in bed with you."

"Oh yuck..." Stella spat out.

"You'd enjoy it."

"I'd be vomiting too much for that."

"Well, you will have to get that password then."

Chapter Twelve

After calling in sick for a third time and getting another pissy response from her boss, Stella locked all her doors and closed the curtains tightly. She didn't want any of Camille's mob peeking in on her again. She then logged onto her computer and into the site of Kit's email address.

"What password would a thief use..." she mumbled to herself. She tapped some keystrokes in.

'Money... access denied.'

'Acquire...access denied.'

'Idol...access denied.'

'Sex...access denied.'

Fifteen minutes later Stella was still typing in any word she thought likely Kit would use. Luckily for her, the email account did not throw you out after five attempts.

"Damn it!" Stella swore as her latest attempt failed. She pictured Kit in her mind, trying to hear his voice. She slapped her head as suddenly the answer came to her. It was so obvious. How many times had Kit told her the most obvious place was sometimes the best hiding place? That had to apply to words as well. Stella tapped in the letters she knew would grant her access.

"Princess...access granted. Welcome Kit Kincaid."

"Bingo!" Stella clapped her hands together with relief. She wondered when Kit had changed his password. It was kind of nice to think he was thinking about her as he typed in his password.

"Do not be doing the gooey thing...save the man and contemplate gooey later..." Stella murmured to herself as she scrolled through the names of the people on screen who had sent emails to Kit. There were a lot. Some she recognized as being quite famous. She could see how Camille would exploit this information for profit. What to do? What to do?

Stella's eyes roamed over the email inbox thoughtfully. At the side there were various folders named neatly all in a row. She thought about her own messy inbox with its haphazard filing system. A thought came to her. If she cleared out Kit's email by sending all the items as mail to herself then she could create some dodgy folders with bogus information that Camille would then get and use.

"Damn you're brilliant, Rowallan," Stella praised herself lavishly as she sent all Kit's email to her own email address. She then pulled up an Excel spreadsheet and started making up names and personal details of a whole list of new clients for Kit.

"Saving the thief's ass once again." As the last folder of false information was uploaded, her phone rang. Stella looked at the clock on the wall, four hours had flown so quickly. Stella reached for the phone

"I have it." Stella listened to the woman demand the password from her. "No, if you want it you have to bring Kit to me and we'll swap for what we want." That Camille was not pleased with this turn of events did not particularly concern Stella. Didn't the woman know that Stella wouldn't hand it over to her without Kit? "We meet on neutral ground. Marchant Park at the kiosk." As Stella hung up, she contemplated her next move.

* * * * *

Kit was still annoyed that he had allowed himself to be captured by Camille's nutcase followers so easily. But he had. And it was all because his mind had been on Stella and not on watching for imminent threats.

The first blow to the kidneys had caught him unawares. The second to the stomach had him doubled up in pain. Yet despite this he had done his best to fend off his attackers. But there had been too many of them and realistically he had never had a chance. When they had bound and gagged him and dropped him at Camille's feet, her knew his troubles had only just begun.

'Kitty kat,' Camille had purred over sweetly at him as she pulled off his gag. His face was battered and cut yet Kincaid was still one of the most attractive men she knew.

"What do you want, Camille?" Kit tried to sit up despite the ropes and the men that kept pushing him back down.

Camille frowned at his tone.

"That's not a nice way to greet an old friend."

"Is having an old friend attacked considered 'nice'?"

"I was angry at you. I needed some payback. You know, the whole woman scorned thing."

Kit arched his eyebrows skeptically at her. There was more than just payback going on here.

"And..."

"And what?" Camille asked innocently.

"You want something, what is it?"

"I want money."

"Really Camille, you shock me," Kit responded cynically. The woman was a greedy grasping bitch. That she wanted money was a given. There was something else on her mind.

"I also want your list of clients."

The other shoe dropped for Kit. There was no way this woman was getting his client list, even if it was to save his life. Too many important people relied on his discretion.

"That's not going to happen."

"Well, I'll hurt your girlfriend then." Camille knew she had scored a direct hit by the way Kit's mouth tightened in anger.

"She's such a pretty little thing with those nice big breasts of hers." Camille licked her lips.

"You touch her and I'll kill you."

"How possessive of you, kitty kat." Camille turned to her followers. "Leave us." Camille dropped down on the floor level with Kit. His hands and legs were tied so she felt no threat. She let her hand drift down to his groin. She wanted this man under her control any way she could get it. Added to that, she was not averse to having a little fun.

"Come now Kit, we can do this the easy way or the hard way." Camille slid his zipper down.

Kit felt her hands encircle his cock. He told himself to be disgusted but his cock had a mind of its own as it reacted eagerly to Camille's touch.

Camille pushed Kit backward onto the floor as she continued caressing him slowly.

"Remember how good we were together?" It had only been for one night but Camille remembered it vividly. She had longed for Kit to be inside her, filling her, stretching her until she came screaming. No one made love quite like Kit.

"That was only once and you know why I did it." Kit knew what she planned to do. This was just some crazy power trip for Camille.

"I could make you come again," Camille insisted knowingly. She could feel his penis rapidly hardening by the second.

Kit had no doubt she could. He was a flesh and blood man for all the instincts and reactions that came with it. But he had no intention of coming on demand for this woman. He focused his mind on Stella. He wanted no other woman but her.

"You'd rape me for your own perverted satisfaction."

Camille laughed at his words

"Not rape. I'm going to slide down onto that big, fat cock of yours and make you come inside me."

Kit watched as she lifted up skirt and positioned her pussy over his straining cock.

"I know you want me," Camille crooned softly as she positioned the head of his cock an inch away from her hot, wet entrance.

"This is awfully desperate and pathetic of you Camille." Kit rapidly switched his thoughts from Stella to his ninth grade English teacher, Miss Howell, and her three hairy chins came into his mind. He felt his cock jerk once as it started to lose interest. "I

thought you had more class than this." He mentally stripped his ninth grade teacher naked and winced as he visualized support hose, hairy legs and breasts hanging down to her knees. Yep, that was doing it. That cock of his was shriveling in disgust. For once in his life, he was glad not to respond to a woman.

Camille swore angrily as she watched his cock subside rapidly. She wanted control, not her own humiliation. She pulled away from him.

"What is wrong with you?"

"You're not Stella. No woman can compete with her." Kit could see that his words of comparison wounded her. "She is the only woman I will ever want."

"Well, I'm not going to waste my time on a pathetic love-struck loser." Camille barked, as she moved away from him and dropped her skirts angrily. "I want your client list now."

"You can't have it." Did she think that trying to make him want to fuck her would give her some strange power over him? He had taken her once in the past for his own reasons. It would never happen again thanks to Stella and Miss Howell. "The list will never be yours."

"But I want it and I will get it."

Kit heard the dangerous and petulant tone of her voice. He knew Camille was capable of anything.

"Oh yeah, how?"

"You will give me your password."

Kit laughed out loud at her request. Like he would do that.

"No way." There were too many important people listed in his files. Camille would only blackmail them. Those people trusted him and Kit wasn't about to let them down.

"Well, if you won't give it to me I'll have to visit the delicious Stella." Camille watched Kit jerk angrily in reaction.

"Leave her out of this."

"Oh but I can't."

"Stella doesn't know anything."

"She would have to know your password, surely."

"Why would she?"

Stella knew his email address but she didn't know his password. Though Stella was smart and if she was forced into finding it to save him...would she do that to save him? Did he mean that much to her? It was one time he hoped Stella didn't.

"We're not that close."

Camille laughed at his words.

"You are fucking the woman, Kit. I would call that close, wouldn't you?"

"I'll tell you anything you want to know." Kit would make up whatever lie he had to.

Camille shook her head sadly at him.

"Too late." Camille decided it was a better option to see his woman anyway. She could get the password and hurt Kit through Stella. "I've decided I want to see Stella. Besides, I don't think I'd believe you now."

"Do not hurt her." Kit would kill Camille if he did.

"Oh kitty kat, as if I would do that."

* * * * *

"I want the password." Camille barked at the woman.

"I want the man," ordered Stella as the two woman faced each other at the kiosk in Marchant Park. "Where's Kit?"

"He's around," Camille replied casually.

Great, she had to deal with a psycho bitch. Had anything been normal since Kit crashed into her life? And would she change a moment of it? Probably only just this particular one. It sucked as moments went.

"I need to see him."

Camille sighed and signaled to her men to drag him over.

Stella bit back the gasp that rose to her lips. Kit was bruised and battered and his clothes were torn. Stella's heart ached as she walked as calmly as could toward him. "Tell your ugly boys to back off, Camille." Stella was suitably impressed at how tough she sounded. She needed to maintain that if she was going to save both their asses.

As Kit's hands were hands bound and Stella and he were outnumbered, Camille called her henchmen off Kit.

"Are you okay?" Kit was relieved to see Stella in one piece and looking as beautiful as ever. He was also mighty impressed at her kick-ass attitude toward Camille and her followers.

Stella snorted in a mixture of bemusement and pride. The man had the crap beaten out of him and he was only worried about her. That was sweet and nice and wildly misguided for a man who was used to looking after himself first and everyone else second.

You're the one who's been beaten up. Are you okay?" Stella had an overriding urge to turn around and slug Camille in the mouth. *Go the urge.*

"Never better, princess." Just seeing Stella made Kit feel stronger. The fact that she had come to his aid without hesitation made his heart swell with love for her.

"I have the password," Stella told Camille, yet her eyes remained on Kit. She had to make him aware that he understood not all was as it seemed.

Kit looked at Stella in alarm.

"Don't give it to her."

"I have to, Kit." Stella looked him steadily in the eyes. A sudden flash of understanding told her Kit knew she wasn't simply going to hand over his files.

Camille grinned happily. People did the dumbest things for love. Stella Rowallan was no smarter than anyone else.

"What is it?"

"The password is 'idol'."

Camille laughed at this.

"You are always so obvious, Kit. Bring the laptop." Camille commanded one of her followers.

'Idol,' thought Kit. What was Stella playing at? That wasn't his password and they both knew it. He watched with interest as Camille logged into his email and laughed excitedly.

"Perfect, I have all your secrets now, kitty kat."

Stella was the only one that knew Camille had nothing but bogus information.

"Let him go."

Camille looked at her as if she meant nothing more to her.

"Why?"

"Because a deal is a deal and you're an honorable woman."

"Says who?" Camille scoffed. "But you're right, I no longer need either of you." She turned to her followers. "Kill them."

Her followers advanced toward Kit and Stella.

Only someone as insane as Camille would try and kill them in a public park. Stella moved in closer to Kit praying that the next part of her plan would happen soon.

Kit tried to push himself in front of Stella. His hands may have been bound but he was ready to protect her anyway he could.

"Get ready to run, lover boy," Stella whispered to him.

Kit looked at her in amazement. What did she have planned?

"What?" Kit hissed back softly.

"Remember what happened the night you saved me?"

Kit remembered. He got it.

"You did an anonymous call to the police." Kit could see police cars racing toward them.

Camille's followers turned around and looked confused.

Stella smiled as she heard Camille swear. No one fucked around with Stella Rowallan and got away with it.

"Payback, bitch!" Stella snapped at her coolly. Camille had to know the police wouldn't be letting her go so easily this time. Stella turned her attention back to Kit. "You had better scarper to avoid questions." Stella produced a pocket knife from her

jeans. She slashed through his ropes. "And don't worry about your email. There's nothing but bogus information on there."

"What about you?" Kit knew he had to go now or risk getting caught and answer a lot of questions he preferred not to.

"I'll be fine. I'm not a thief with a past."

"I love you." Kit leaned down and kissed her quickly.

"I...have to think about all that love stuff..."

"Don't think too long, princess." Kit made his escape.

Stella stood and looked as innocent as any park visitor does when caught up in something unawares.

"Bitch!" Camille spat at Stella as the police grabbed her.

The police officer looked at Stella.

"I have never seen this woman before in my life, officer," Stella lied.

Chapter Thirteen

Two days later, Stella was unemployed and thinking about Kit Kincaid. She hadn't seen him since the park but he was ever present in her mind. She had sent back his client list to his email address. But so far there was no response from him. And she had expected one and that was a problem. She wasn't used to having a particular person on her mind. It threw her completely.

Her boss hadn't taken kindly to her having so many sick days off and Stella had explained to him that her care factor about her job was low. She hated her job. As far as she was concerned he could take his job and shove it in his ear. She had other more important personal issues to deal with than work. While Stella knew this had been a completely emotional, irrational response and it wasn't her boss's fault that she had man troubles, it had felt damn good to quit a job she loathed.

So the next problem was what to do about Kit. In essence, she really didn't have to do anything as whatever it was between them was over. Okay, that was a lie. However she knew if she said that enough times she would one day believe it. She had read about love, she had seen people acting all silly over love so she knew it existed. So she was fairly sure she was in love with this thief of hers. The problem was Stella didn't know what to do about her feelings for Kit. That they were sexually compatible was undeniable, but sex was not everything. And, if Stella were being honest, she knew it was not just sex between them. But honesty was tough to face when you were scared of taking the fall into love.

But then, realistically, what could she have with Kit? Was she really in love with him? Did she even know what love was? She had never been in love before so how would she know that she was not mixing up sex with love? And was it really possible to fall in love with in such incredibly short, intense time? All the ice cream in the world could not work out that problem. She knew she had to ask someone who was in love and who knew both her and Kit. She called Simone.

"I'm on my honeymoon, Stel," Simone had told her as she answered her cell phone.

"Well, you shouldn't have left your phone turned on. Anyway you're married now, so you can have sex any time," Stella responded. "I have a question. How did you know you loved Peter and that he was the only one for you?"

"Where does this come from...oh my God, you have fallen in love with Kit Kincaid." Simone was not at all surprised. "I knew it when you both disappeared and Peter found your skirt in the garden."

Stella looked down at the phone in surprise.

"Weren't you at all worried about finding my skirt without me in it? I could have been attacked."

"Nah, Peter was outside smoking and he said he saw you and Kit making love." And he had watched and told Simone all about it. Not that she would give that bit of information to Stella. Stella could be a prude about things like that.

"Peter saw me?" Stella felt her cheeks redden with embarrassment. How much had he seen? She thought back to the cleaner watching her and Kit together. She had come a long way, so what was the point of being embarrassed? "And we weren't making love."

"Yeah sure, whatever." Simone liked this side of Stella. It was different from the usual control freak who she hung out with. "So you and Kit, huh? And now you want to ask Auntie Sim all about falling in love."

Stella sighed slightly. She wanted to know what Simone thought but she also knew she would never hear the end of it.

"It's just a hypothetical question."

"Sure it is."

"Just shut up and answer."

"Okay, I knew I was in love because I could not imagine spending time with anyone else. I liked that I could tell Peter anything and that he would listen and that he made me laugh. I just knew if I needed anything he would be there and visa versa. And the sex is not just sex, it is actually making love." Simone sighed contentedly. She was happy with her life. "And let's just forget about the farewell sex I had with Kit."

"Yes, let's do that." Stella was jealous as hell when she thought about it.

"There is nothing about Peter that I do not love. I would do anything for him, Stel."

"Like break into museums and dealing with mad witches?"

Simone laughed chuckled softly at her words. She knew there was something strange about Kit's business but she had never been fussed enough about it to ask. She took people on face value and she had liked Kit's face. The rest was irrelevant.

"Sure, I can't imagine either of those things happening. But yeah, I would do whatever I had to for my man." The silence on the other end of the phone spoke volumes to Simone. "So what are you going to do about Kit?"

"I don't know." Stella was more confused than ever. All the things Simone mentioned were the things that Stella felt about Kit. She wanted to be with him. He made her feel safe and cherished. He made her smile. So what the hell was wrong with her?

"You know I knew it would be Kit for you when you walked in on us you were so pissed. I could tell instantly that you were jealous."

"Possibly." Stella had been as jealous as hell. Had it just been the fact that a gorgeous man was banging her best friend, or had been an instinctual feeling of knowing who your mate for life was and not wanting them to be with someone else?

"And Kit was definitely interested in you."

"How do you know?"

"He told me before he joined you at the table for dinner."

"What did he say?" It was almost like being back at high school.

"Kit asked about me you and he said you were hot and he wanted to get to know you." Simone remembered the conversation vividly as it was quite sweet and romantic and so unlike the Kit she knew. "He also said to me 'have you ever met someone and instantly you know you want to spend the rest of your life with them?' Kit was talking about you. You made an impact on the man in just one brief moment."

Stella tried to remember if Kit was drunk when he came to the table. Or was that just the sweetest thing anyone had ever said about her.

"So you fell in love at first sight. It happens, Stel."

Stella sighed softly.

"Kit's a thief, Sim."

"No one's perfect."

"You can justify everything can't you?" Stella thought about what her friend had said. "He lied to me."

"Yeah, maybe he did," Simone responded. "And maybe you were looking for any reason to end it with Kit because you were scared of falling in love."

Maybe...

"I'm not scared. I'm..." Stella blew out a loud sigh. What was she?

"You're terrified, Stel. You've never had anyone to love or love you and you feel totally out of control."

"I love you."

"And I love you back, but we're friends and that's a different commitment."

"I barely know him."

"Listen Stel, life is short and time is irrelevant when it comes to stuff like this. Things just happen. Do not pass up the man of your heart on a technicality. You love him, don't you?" Simone did not need to see Stella's face to know that. Stella did not give her heart easily.

"I can't believe it, but yes I do."

"Believe it and do something about it."

"How do I do that without making a complete fool of myself?"

"You'll think of something. Everyone makes a fool of themselves over love and no one cares in the end." Simone chuckled over the line. "You know, I was just thinking I should charge for this advice. I can be pretty damned sensitive when I have to be."

Stella laughed at her friend's words. Simone would make a great analyst. She loved listening to people spill their secrets. Problem was, she liked to gossip. so one talent cancelled the other out.

"By the way, Sim, I will have to kill you if you ever touch Kit again."

"I completely understand." She would scratch any woman's eyes out for looking twice at her husband. "Go get your man."

"Thanks Sim...go and have sex now."

"I will and I expect the same of you. Take the leap Stella Rowallan, the fall is worth it."

Stella hung up the phone and thought about what to do. How did she get the thief's attention? It had to be something different and unusual and allowing him an out if he chose it. Stella looked at her computer. An idea came to her. Could she? Should she?

"Oh what the hell..." she muttered to herself as she sat down and switched it on. After fifteen minutes she had written her email to him.

Stolen, one seldom used heart. Owner cranky, sorry, lovelorn and lonely. She made a mistake. She is ready to pay any cost or take any risk to be with the thief of her heart. Please take a chance on her. She is a slow learner but she understands the lesson now. She loves her thief and wants a second chance.

Love, Princess

Her finger hovered over the send icon. What did she have to lose? The worst Kit could do would be either to read it and delete it, throw up at the cornball approach or laugh his head off. The ball was in his court. Stella hit send and watched it disappear from the screen. An immediate feeling of regret and fear raced through her veins. What if he didn't respond? Oh God, had she done the right thing?

"Get a grip woman. It's only an email that could change the course of your entire life..." Stella muttered softly, cynically to herself.

An hour later, Stella sat by her email, awaiting her thief. Another thirty minutes without response and she was getting a little pissed. Ten minutes later Stella stood up.

"Fine...whatever... If he doesn't care then neither do I."

But across town, Kit Kincaid cared greatly. He had been surprised and delighted by the email. Stella loved him. He sat and read it over and over. His first instinct had been to rush over and pull Stella into his arms and never let her go. But that was too obvious. He wanted something different. He wanted time to make the woman realize he was the only man for her.

Chapter Fourteen

Stella knew she looked as good and as businesslike as she possibly could. Her hair was swept up in a professional looking french plait, her skirt was conservative black, skimming her knees and she had even pulled on sheer pull up stockings to complete her ensemble. She looked like someone she would employ. She gave one last pat to flatten the collar of her white silk blouse. The mirror in the lift told her she looked professional so why didn't she feel it?

"Bloody Kit Kincaid..." Stella muttered to herself.

"Ma'am?" The uniformed lift attendant looked at her politely.

"Nothing, just chatting to myself," Stella responded to the man whose job it was to escort guests to the penthouse. She looked up at the numbers above the door as the lift sped to the penthouse. Who the hell called a job interview in the penthouse of such an exclusive and expensive hotel? The lift itself was grandeur personified, with its wood paneling, plush carpet and a cut crystal chandelier. No wonder they had to have a lift attendant. Who but the very rich would put a chandelier in a lift? They probably had to stop people from nicking the elegant crystals that suspended from it. What was the expression? "The rich are different"? They sure were. The lift was more luxurious than her own home. Though Stella was not ashamed of her humble abode, she had to admit there was something to be said about splendor and luxury. A girl could get used to it quite easily.

Stella breathed slowly in and out to calm her nerves. She wasn't worried about the interview. The only thing Stella could think about was Kit and why he had not responded to her email, even if only to tell her to piss off. That she could have accepted. Well, sort of. At least it would have been a response. It was the silence that killed her. Two days had passed without a word from Kit. He was obviously out thieving somewhere and too busy to contact the woman he supposedly loved. The one overwhelming emotion that Stella felt was foolishness. Simone was right. You made a fool of yourself over love. She had told Kit she loved him and he had not responded. Not the most flattering thing to have happen. And yes, email was probably not the best way to confess her love, but she was new to all this. Though, because he did not respond, at least she didn't have the pain of looking in his eyes and realizing he didn't love her.

"Oh yeah, that makes it all so much better, Stella." She looked at the attendant who looked politely back at her. "I talk to myself all the time. I'm harmless." The lift attendant just smiled politely and was too well mannered to call her crazy. She had to focus on the job interview and not on Kit.

The woman who had called her sounded professional and courteous. She had asked Stella to come and discuss a possible position that had just come up in their company. Well of course she could, Stella had told the woman, wondering what the job was. She had erratically applied for so many on an local online employment website that she no longer had any recollection of what any of the company names were or what the jobs were about. Anyway, what did it matter? They were just jobs, a means to make money and pay bills.

When the lift stopped Stella stepped out into a plush foyer.

"Wow." The lift had been an eye opener but the foyer was something else. No generic landscapes or walls scraped by the previous guest's luggage here. Gold patterned walls, more crystal and a carpet you could sleep on. She had stayed in motels before but this place was beyond your simple bed and breakfast. Stella suddenly felt inadequate in her Target-bought clothes. But she was not one to turn tail and run. She knew she was the equal to anyone on the planet, Target clothes or not, so she followed the attendant up to the door of the penthouse suite. It was time to gird her loins and get that job.

The most impossibly beautiful woman opened the door of the penthouse suite. She was elegant and stylish with her sleek black hair, finely chiseled cheekbones and pouty, model mouth. You just knew she had never seen the inside of a chain store. Stella's heart sank. Oh yeah, she knew she was the equal to most but this woman was beyond comparison. Stella almost turned tail and went back to the lift. But she accepted the outstretched hand and clasped it in her own, noting the woman didn't have a single scar or imperfection on her.

"Please come in Stella," the woman invited her.

Whoa! So this was what a penthouse looked like. Stella knew she was probably staring like some yokel but this would probably be the only time she would ever be in one.

"Nice place," Stella murmured casually as she took in lush, elegant surroundings.

The woman smiled in amusement. She liked Stella Rowallan on sight. She would do nicely.

"I'll just get Kit."

"Kit!" Stella spat out in amazement. "Kit Kincaid?"

"That's right." She swept off to get the man in question.

Oh frigging hell. Now she got it. Kit was married. And this gorgeous creature was his wife. Had she read Stella's email instead? How embarrassing. Instead of a good old-fashioned eye-scratching-out catfight, as Stella would have done, was this woman now letting her know that there was no way she could be a part of Kit's life as there was no way she could compete with her? If so, Stella would have preferred a politely worded email asking Stella to back off from this woman's husband rather than this. This was humiliating. Stella turned on her heel and headed for the door.

"Princess..."

Oh damn, that voice. Stella would know it anywhere. It was time to be cool and calm and professional and then she would run like hell. There was no way she was going to let on how much his being married affected her.

"Kit, how are you?" Stella was impressed by the tone of her voice as she turned around and looked at him. Black trousers, white shirt and a loosened necktie adorned a lean body she knew and craved. The man was professional, sexy and not hers.

Kit was amused at her cool tone. He could see in her eyes that she was upset. He wondered why. Sure, he had not answered her email so she was entitled to be annoyed but something more was upsetting her.

"I'm fine and you?" Kit adopted the same polite tone.

"Fine, thanks," Stella looked around the room and tried to act casually despite the rage that was burning inside her. "You could have told me you were married." She did not add, "Then I wouldn't have sent that damned email and made a fool of myself."

It was then Kit understood the emotional turmoil in her eyes.

"Would it have made a difference?" He approached her slowly, not surprised that she was holding her ground in a pretence of not caring.

Stella didn't want this man anywhere near her. She had done too many dumb things already with him. She did not want to add to the list.

"Ah, yeah. I don't take other women's men." That was just trashy. And she certainly wouldn't ever allow herself to be second best to anyone. She was surprised that Kit would think and act otherwise.

"That's good to know, princess." Kit started removing his tie.

Stella watched as he carelessly flung the tie to the ground.

"So what is this all about? Is this some lesson you wanted me to learn?" Whatever it was, Stella didn't want to be a part of. She did not believe in open marriages.

"No," Kit responded as he started unbuttoning his shirt. He saw Stella gulp nervously in response.

"What it is then?" And why was he taking off his clothes? And why wasn't she storming out all angry and affronted as any sane woman would? Maybe because she was nowhere near sane and she was riveted to the spot by his sexy, slow striptease.

"I want to offer you a job." Kit shrugged out of his shirt. He could see the desire in her eyes.

Stella was angry as hell. How dare he put her in this position! He was offering her a job out of pity and torturing her at the same time. Kit knew she wanted him but there was no way she could have him if he was married. She watched as his hands went down to his belt buckle. Stella felt the rush of moisture between her legs as she remembered just what those trousers covered up.

"Why are you taking your trousers off? Do you do this was all potential employees?"

"No, only you have that effect on me, princess." Kit dropped his trousers to the ground and kicked them free. He wore no underwear to restrain the eager cock that now faced her. "So you need a job?"

Stella stared at his cock, then backed up at him. Just remembering how it felt inside her made her whole body tighten with anticipation. How was she supposed to conduct herself professionally when she had a gorgeous, naked man primed for action before her?

"This is not going to work, Kit." If Stella could control herself, then so could he.

Kit stood barely inches from her. He could almost feel the contained rage inside her.

"Why not?"

"I don't want a pity job or a pity fuck."

Kit threw his head back and laughed out loud. Trust Stella to get it all so wrong. She complicated the easiest things by jumping to conclusions.

"I'm so glad you think this is funny." Stella had had enough. She had her pride. She could only take so much. "I'm leaving." She headed for the door.

"That's a shame, as I was planning on making love to you until you couldn't stand." Kit watched as Stella stiffened and turned to face him.

Stella marched up to the naked Kit and poked her finger into his chest in anger.

"What about your wife? You know the beautiful creature I just met? Do you give a stuff about her?"

"What about Gabrielle?" Kit caught her hand against his chest as she poked him again

"You're married." Stella slapped him with her free hand. "Having sex with other people thing is wrong."

"I'm glad you believe that." Kit pulled her close to his body.

Stella felt his erection hard and insistent against the fabric of her skirt.

"Don't do this to me."

The pleading look in her eyes was proof positive that the woman he had fallen for loved him back. He slid his hands down her back and cupped her butt, pulling her to her.

"Why?" Stella's squirming was testing Kit's self control. He wanted her but only when she was good and ready and begging him to take her.

"Because I'm not sleeping with a married man."

"Why do you think I'm married?" Kit's lips slid down to the soft skin near her ear and nuzzled her gently.

Oh God, she couldn't concentrate when he did that. She found it hard not to wrap her arms around him and give in to sensation.

"Well, she's stunning and she was with you." And Stella was as jealous as hell but not about to admit it.

"And you were jealous and jumped to conclusions." Kit looked into her eyes. "She is married but not to me. And you are way more beautiful than her."

Stella looked at Kit in amazement.

"What...I am? But..."

"Don't complicate things princess. It's simple. Gabrielle is leaving my employ and I need a personal assistant."

"You want me as a PA?" Disappointment flooded her. Was that all she was to Kit? An available, responsive body?

"You can have any job you want or no job at all, princess, as long as you are a permanent fixture in my life." Kit watched her eyes widen with realization and hope. I love you, Stella Rowallan, and I plan on marrying you as soon as possible."

"Marriage?" Stella hadn't thought about that. She felt a strange surge of warmth suffuse her. Kit wanted to marry her. She looked at him suspiciously. There had to be more to it than this. "Why didn't you respond to the email?"

"Because I wanted you to think about me and sweat on my response." Kit slapped her ass lightly. "I also wanted to have time to devote all my attention to you. We have all the time in the world and I need you naked." Kit pulled up her skirt and pushed down her panties, searching for the slick wetness he knew he would find between her legs.

Stella opened her legs wider as Kit's fingers found her clit and started to gently stroke it. She looked into his eyes.

"I'm scared."

"I know," Kit responded softly.

Stella took a deep breath.

"I love you."

"Is this because I have my hand in your panties and you don't want me to stop touching you?" Kit grinned at her.

If he stopped she would kill him.

"It's that and the fact that I know I want you for always and that there can never be anyone else for me but you."

"I knew that," Kit murmured in satisfaction as he removed his hand and started pulling Stella's clothes off. It seemed like ages since he felt her skin against his.

Stella allowed Kit free access to her body as he started quickly stripping her.

"What if..."

"What if the sky falls, the oceans rise and the cost of bananas sky rockets again?" Kit had stripped everything from Stella but her thigh-high pull-up stockings. They were too sexy to remove. "Whatever happens, princess, we'll cope,"

"Do you ever worry about anything?"

Kit picked Stella up in his arms and carried her to the bedroom.

"Only getting you naked and being inside you." He kissed her hard.

"Is this part of the job description?" Stella gasped as his lips left hers. If so, she was definitely going to enjoy this job.

Kit placed Stella on the bed and smiled as she instantly opened her legs wide for him. He loved the way she responded to him.

"I will insist of being inside you quite a bit." Kit settled himself between the cradle of her thighs and sucked down hard on her breast.

Stella moaned out loud. She loved his mouth on her. She clasped his head to her breast and urged him on to devour both breasts equally.

"That seems an acceptable condition, as long as I can drive you crazy." She reached down and stroked the cock that lay hard and pulsating against her stomach.

"I don't doubt your ability to do that for a second, princess." Kit grabbed her legs and placed them over his shoulders so her pussy was before his mouth. "Lie back and enjoy." Kit licked his tongue down the folded cleft.

Stella screamed and clutched the sheet below as Kit ruthlessly dragged his tongue back and forward, stopping every so often to spin it wickedly on her clit. She was panting with excitement as his tongue slid into her vagina.

"Oh my God!" she yelled as she came in waves of intense pleasure against his mouth. She saw the look of triumph in her lover's eyes. "Get that cock inside me now, lover boy," she ordered, her voice husky and demanding.

"Yes, ma'am." Kit pulled Stella to her knees and spun her around to face the mirrored headboard of the bed. He wanted them both to be able to see every minute of their love making.

Stella looked at the reflection of herself and Kit in the mirror. Her eyes were hot with wanting and her nipples were red and swollen from Kit's mouth. She grasped the edge of the top of the headboard, spread her legs and thrust her ass out toward Kit.

Kit moved in close behind her and grabbed her hips pulling her up to meet him. As he drove deep inside he sighed in contentment. It was like coming home.

"I love you, princess." Kit pulled in and out of her several times heightening their pleasure.

"Are you saying that 'cause you have your cock inside me?" Stella pushed back against Kit urging him to stay inside her.

Kit slid fully back inside and looked in the mirror at the woman he loved.

"I'm saying it because I never want to miss a second of being with you again." Kit started thrusting deeply within Stella, feeling her muscles contract and suck his cock even further inside. "I'll steal whatever time I have."

* * * * *

"I have to tell you that I am pretty impressed with the whole fake folder thing." Kit kissed Stella softly as they lay arms entwined on the bed. That she had been smart enough to transfer all his files and change the password impressed the hell out of Kit.

"It's true, I am impressive," agreed Stella delighted with the chuckle from Kit. "So is that offer of a job still good?"

"Got sacked from the last one huh?"

"Yes the man had a problem with me having a sex life."

"Philistine," murmured Kit as his hands roamed the curve of Stella's ass.

"I would actually call him a whiny little bastard." Stella pushed Kit over and rolled on top of him. "So do I get a job or what?"

"What is it you want to do?" Kit's hands instantly rose to caress to her breasts.

"Other than make love to you on a regular basis?" Stella asked smiling down at Kit. She had never felt so free and loved in her life. What the hell had she been so scared of? "Teach me about the thief business."

"Are you sure?" This was not something Kit expected, especially in light of the whole idol incident.

"As long as it means spending time with you, I'm, sure."

Kit pulled Stella toward him and kissed her.

"I love you."

"And I love you right back." It felt so good to say it without worrying about the consequences.

Kit felt Stella's hand reach for his cock.

"What are you doing?" They had made love for hours. Kit doubted his ability to be ready soon so. But the gentle, firm touch of Stella's hand allayed any fears he may have had. His cocked jumped instantly to attention.

"Whatever I want, any objections thief of mine?"

"Take me. I'm yours, princess."

Stella grabbed his cock and slid down it until her vagina had sheathed it completely.

"As I belong only to you, lover boy."

Epilogue

Six Months Later

"Oh, bloody hell!" The woman yelped as she came across the couple making love in the bride's room. This was not what she expected to see but she wasn't surprised. The man had a thing about brides.

Kit Kincaid was once again shagging the bride and enjoying every minute of it. He delighted in the soft whimpers that emanated from the woman who had her ass up in the air and her long white skirts thrown over her head as he pumped back and forth inside her.

"Do you want to join in?" He looked at the woman, not shocked by the intrusion. He recalled this scene happening once before. But it was much different now.

"No, I'm a married woman." She watched the couple and felt an intense heat rush through her. "I actually came in here to tell Stella it was time to take that walk down the aisle."

Stella fought her way through the skirts that were thrown over her head.

"I'll be there in a moment." Not that for one second she wanted Kit to withdraw his cock from her ass until she was good and ready, wedding or no wedding. The bride needed an orgasm. Everything else would have to wait.

"Are you going to tell me this is not what it looks like?" Simone asked the bride, smiling as Stella threw her head back and moaned.

"Oh, it is exactly what it looks like, and it has nothing to do with farewell sex." Stella felt the orgasm start to erupt inside her. She panted softly. "By the way, that's a horrible dress." No one looked good in lime green. That's why Stella chose it specifically for her matron of honor. Payback was a bitch.

"We'll just wait for you to come then shall we?" Simone grinned and left them to it.

Stella shrieked as waves of pleasure drove into her stomach and down her legs.

"It sort of is farewell sex, princess" Kit grunted as he thrust into her. "Farewell to the single life for both of us."

Stella's body slumped down against the back of the chair in intense relaxation. Kit was damn good at making her relaxed. She had been nervous before but now she did not care.

"You know, we'll probably get staid and boring and not want sex."

Maybe on planet Zork but not on Earth while they could still breathe, thought Stella, negating her own words.

"Well, we can always visit our friend at the museum then," Kit groaned hoarsely as he came hard, shooting hot sperm inside her. He pulled Stella back against him, wrapping his arms around her.

Stella pushed back into his embrace. She adored Kit Kincaid. She blew a breath up to remove the hair from her face.

"You've got some mighty interesting guests out there on the groom's side, lover boy." Some might call them well dressed thugs but Stella was found them all perfectly polite and charming.

"They're all harmless and innocent, princess."

"As harmless and innocent as gin." Stella no longer cared about what Kit did for a living. She just wanted him. Whatever happened, happened. She would work the rest out as they went along. "Time to make an honest woman of out me, oh thief of mine."

"Princess, I'm yours."

About the Author

Amarinda Jones believes anything is possible and sometimes just asking for the impossible will surprise someone enough that they will give it to you. Writing is like that. Put it out there and wait for a response. There is always the possibility you may fall on your ass, but after all, that's what cellulite is for. Amarinda believes in taking chances, speaking her mind and aging disgracefully. Twenty years from now she plans on being the neighborhood witch that all the kids are scared of. But then, everyone has to have a hobby.

Amarinda welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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